ROMANCE BY REQUEST

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STEUART M. EMERY



NEW YORK

GREENBERG : PUBLISHER

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ROMANCE BY REQUEST

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[I]

"MY faithful friend," inquired Stephen Quarrendar engagingly of the companion with whom he sat at breakfast, " would you walk a mile for a million dollars? "

The pair of horn-rimmed noseglasses which imparted to his listener the air of wisdom so necessary in the advertising business, narrowly escaped leaping into midair. Ted Holly did not ponder Quarrendar's question more than an eighth of a second.

" Would I? " he shouted. Instinctively a nearby waiter started towards the table that stood in the sun-

shine of the corner window and then stopped, realizing that he wasn't wanted. In the high-ceilinged, oak-panelled dining room of the Colonial Club, it was claimed, all the waiters looked like United States Senators but moved much faster.

Quarrendar leaned back in his chair, exhibiting the satisfaction of a young man who feels that by getting through breakfast at ten o'clock he has indeed commenced the day auspiciously. Just outside the window the sidewalks were filled with hastening crowds and huge busses careened on their way, packed to the steps with the toilers of New York, the city where every hour is rush hour and minutes mean money. But he never even sent a glance in their direction.

"Would I walk a mile for a million dollars?" It was Ted Holly returning to the attack. "What's the idea of asking that kind of question?"

Quarrendar smiled upon him, a likable, humorous crinkling of the lips which proclaimed that he was not inclined to take the world and its works too seriously at the present moment. In fact, it was obvious that he was not accustomed to taking anything very seriously outside of business hours.

"You see that's about all I have to do this bright June morning."

"What you need," declared Holly with the candor of an old friend, "is an alienist. Or go get yourself psychoanalyzed. You're crazy."

"To walk a mile on hard asphalt to collect a paltry million?" Quarrendar beamed his best. "I agree

with you. The advertising brain goes directly to the point. Thomas"—at the word the Senatorial waiter who had been lurking in the middle distance came to attention—"tell the doorman I shall want a taxicab in fifteen minutes. A limousine tabicab, by the way."

The waiter disappeared with haste that was positively undignified. He had heard the magic word "million" and henceforth young Mr. Quarrendar would meet with the most perfect service at his disposal. The doorman would see that not one but at least three limousine taxicabs were waiting, probably with their motors running.

"So in fifteen minutes," snorted Holly, "you're going uptown to get a million dollars? You ought to be careful or the first traffic policeman will arrest you for a cuckoo out of its cage."

"Downtown, Theodore. Downtown—to a towering, if musty, building in which all the better sort of lawyers have their lairs. In short to the chambers of a certain Mr. Ethan Hulbert, who drew up the will of my late Great-uncle Homer. He wants to see me this morning at my convenience. And incidentally, not a word against Great-uncle Homer Quarrendar."

"I've heard of him." The tone was one of becoming respect. "Philanthropist, wasn't he? And—er—quite an original character?"

"Very," smiled Quarrendar in cheerful reminiscence. "The million I mentioned, it might be well to add, is merely the first figure which came into my mind.

Great-uncle Homer really did have a number of millions."

"I remember now," breathed Holly. "There were columns about him in the papers. But somehow I never connected a person like him with you."

"The point is well taken. I don't think anyone ever connected the well-known philanthropist Homer Quarrendar with the Stephen Quarrendar who sits before you. We never saw much of each other as you may well believe. But I liked the old boy."

"And there aren't any near relatives. I remember reading that." Behind the noseglasses young Mr. Holly's eyes gleamed excitedly. Here was a convert at last. "Why, you poor idiot, he may have left you his whole fortune."

"It is possible. You never could tell anything about Great-uncle Homer." Quarrendar gazed pleasedly at the circle of blue which floated upward from his cigarette. Just like that smoke-ring one could drift through life with a few million dollars. Gay and airy and borne on attractive breezes hither and yon. He knew that this was the most important day in all his career and a strange thrill imparted itself to him.

The voice of Thomas, the Senatorial waiter, spoke reverently in his ear.

"Your motor is waiting, Mr. Quarrendar."

"Tell it to wait. Mr. Holly and I have not met in some time. He only arrived this morning from Chicago and we have matters of moment to discuss. Ted, you were saying——?"

"I'm saying nothing," barked Holly. "Do you realize that you've stretched this breakfast of ours into an hour and a half and that I'm due in a man's office right now?" He thrust his watch back into his pocket with a resentful gesture as though it had betrayed him into a dalliance incompatible with the advertising business. "You haven't changed a bit since I last saw you and I don't suppose you ever will. Meet me here at one-thirty."

A few minutes later Stephen Quarrendar ransomed a glossy Panama from the coatroom boy and set it at a debonair angle. A carnation bloomed in the lapel of his loosely-cut tweed town coat and a scarf of colorful weave added to the general impression that here was a young man well on the road to fortune. He nodded to the attendant who swung open the door of the limousine and sank back on its cushions. Softly, as though not to disturb the thoughts of its passenger the motor rolled through the pageant of the Avenue. A carefree young man this, to all outward appearances, bearing the indefinable stamp of breeding that goes with clear, forward-looking eyes and dependable chin. His conversation might be nonchalant to the verge of gayety but the set of his shoulders indicated that he would be an excellent person to have beside one in a tight place. And Stephen Quarrendar despite his airy words of the breakfast table right now was in a very tight place, all by himself.

"Just a little faster, driver, if you can," he murmured as they shot into a banked mass of traffic that

stretched for blocks. "I am endeavoring to keep an important engagement."

Only last night Mr. Ethan Hulbert had sent for him and it was none other than Ethan Hulbert who had drawn up Great-uncle Homer's will. Hardly more than a vague picture of Great-uncle Homer, whom he had not seen in years, came in answer to his effort at recollection. A stooping, round-shouldered old great-uncle in a black broadcloth suit whose eyebrows were bushy and whose temper was a thing to marvel at. He plunged a gold-headed stick about when he was aroused, which was often, and he ran his rambling, turreted mansion on Long Island by a maze of bells and buzzers, each of which was supposed to mean something. It was quite true that you never could tell about Great-uncle Homer. He would eject a housekeeper who had been with him for ten years and endow a new home for newsboys in the same morning. He enjoyed a good dinner and a good lawsuit with equal gusto. How he made his money he never would tell. Stephen Quarrendar had a genuine fondness for Great-uncle Homer but Great-uncle Homer preferred, apparently, to preserve that affection by keeping him at a distance.

"In reference to the provision regarding yourself in the last will and testament of Homer Quarrendar, late of . . ." That particular sentence in Mr. Hulbert's letter seemed to have printed itself deep into his memory. The letter had been delivered to him only last evening as he sat in a corner of the club lounge,

answering the hails of fellow-members in dinner jackets and shining white bosoms who were passing out to the enjoyments of a large city. All the lights of New York after dark flashed and summoned.

But Quarrendar was not in the mood for either the theater or the bright lane of Broadway. He was wondering as he had never wondered before. It is not pleasant to sit in a spacious New York club without an idea where next week's meals are coming from.

"Ah, here already?" he inquired, stirred from reverie. The limousine had drawn up before the entrance to a many-storied building into which streams of people seemed to be flowing. Trouble in New York City is an easy thing to get into and a building housing any number of lawyers always has a crowd at its doors. Quarrendar alighted and stood for a moment inspecting his surroundings, while his hand closed on the five $20 bills in his pocket which represented his entire capital in the world.

The same old crinkling, humorous smile lightened his features. He was absolutely certain that Great-uncle Homer wasn't going to leave him as much as a dime. There was no reason at all why he should.

"But at least I gave a friend a thrill," he murmured. Ted Holly, by now, with the recollection of breakfast behind him would be talking more important money than ever in his clients' office. "And I can give him another for luncheon. The heir to millions comes back fairly staggering under the weight of a nice, new shining buffalo nickel."

"Sixt' floor," croaked the elevator operator, an individual of lacklustre gaze, in response to his question. The elevator roared upward and was passing the eighth story while the eyes of its pilot remained fixed on space. He blinked twice as though coming out of slumber and reversed the lever. "Down the hall to th' right. No, maybe it's th' left."

Thus guided, Quarrendar found himself facing a switch-board. Efficiency confronted him, blonde and highly powdered.

"You have an appointment?"

On either side of Mr. Ethan Hulbert's anteroom the chairs were filled by callers, wearing the patient look of those who have waited long and expect to wait a long while longer. Mr. Hulbert, it was clear, had his clients well trained. The large gentleman yonder whose close-clipped moustache relieved the monotony of what might otherwise be mistaken for a pink moon could certainly be no less than a railroad president. Probably he spent his summers inspecting his roads and his winters on the witness stand. A solid, businesslike carriage and faultless tailoring proclaimed that the rest as well were customers of standing in the habit of paying good money for the law.

"The nephew of Homer Quarrendar," he announced and was pleased to see at least three heads bob up at his remark. He might be due to emerge from Mr. Ethan Hulbert's office a ruined man but there was nothing to prevent his enjoying the sensation of entering it like a conquering hero.

A buzz, a sweet soprano whispering into the transmitter and Quarrendar was marching down a corridor behind an office boy whose face proclaimed that he was a stranger to whistling. Through half-open doors he observed rooms, filled from floor to ceiling with books in burnished calf and green. Other doors, like those of cells, were closed, allowing no glimpse through their frosted glass of the mysteries within. His feet, he felt, were ringing hollowly on the floor of the corridor. At last Quarrendar was in the clutches of the law.

It was a large office in which Mr. Ethan Hulbert sat, filled with a flood of clear, judicial light from tall windows at one side. No books adorned its clean, steel-gray walls; no piles of papers heavy with seals, no flood of legal mail encumbered the broad mahogany desk. Not even a brief-case was in view. Quite possibly Mr. Ethan Hulbert carried within his head all the law that it was necessary for any one man to know.

"Bring in the prisoner," murmured Quarrendar as he found himself sinking into the seat indicated to him. It was impossible not to feel guilty of everything from arson to piracy on the high seas beneath the rapier-like glance that now ran over his person.

"Tell Johnson I wish the Quarrendar will," pronounced Mr. Hulbert to the office boy, who departed instantly and completely. "And now—I trust that you find that chair comfortable?"

"Oh—er—yes, indeed," volunteered his caller. Never before had Stephen Quarrendar encountered a person who bred such an instant feeling of correctness

and accuracy as the gray, small gentleman facing him. Logic reposed in that aristocratic, brainy forehead, an atmosphere of absolute authenticity seemed to emanate from the trim side-burns. There was not a jarring note in the room or in the appearance of Mr. Ethan Hulbert. He suggested the incarnation of efficiency coupled with discretion, a repository of flawless facts. The railroad president, or whoever he might be in the anteroom, would never have to worry about the questions of an investigating attorney with such a counsel as this.

"I am happy," stated Mr. Hulbert, "to see you looking so well." Between his fingers he held a document of imposing size, closely-typewritten and marginally initialled, which Quarrendar realized had been laid before him an instant since by a shadowy individual who had slipped in and out of the room. That must be the will of Great-uncle Homer, disposing of his millions with plenty of remarks. "It was about a week ago, I think, that I saw you last. I do not often forget a young man's face."

"Yes," said Quarrendar, "I attended, of course. Great-uncle Homer and myself may not have gotten along too well but I rather liked him and so I was there. He didn't have very many relatives."

"Few indeed. And hardly a handful of what you might call close friends. I pride myself that I may be regarded as one of them."

Mr. Hulbert cleared his throat and ruffled through the bulky pages of the document while Quarrendar experienced an odd sensation of tenseness. He knew

what was coming. Mr. Hulbert was about to read the will without further parleying. He wondered if his feet would scrape horribly if he moved in his chair.

In a measured voice Mr. Ethan Hulbert began and through the room there streamed a succession of sentences and phrases—involved, repetitious, endless—of which his hearer could make little or nothing. Never before had he realized what a task it must have been to translate the desires of Great-uncle Homer into the proper legal phraseology or how impossible it is for the layman to understand that same phraseology. He gulped and found Mr. Hulbert's keen gaze upon him.

"I wonder," broke from Quarrendar, "if you couldn't tell me what is there in—er—in ——"

"I see. Since I am naturally familiar with the provisions of your great-uncle's will you wish me to summarize it briefly in what might be termed plain English." Already Quarrendar had recognized that Mr. Hulbert never made an explanation, he merely stated facts. "I should be glad to do so. Afterwards the office shall send you a copy of the original testament."

The document lay flat upon the desk under the lawyer's hand and now and again he tapped it with one finger as though establishing some magic current by which its contents flowed through his person and up into his brain.

"The total value of your Great-uncle Homer's estate was four million, eight hundred and forty thousand and odd dollars." The tones of Mr. Hulbert though

low were startlingly distinct. " Of this sum, practically four million dollars is to be devoted to establishing the Quarrendar Foundation for ——"

Stephen Quarrendar never could recollect just what the Foundation was for except that it was something weird but dear to the heart of Great-uncle Homer. He heard something about the antiquated Long Island house and grounds being presented to an institution for something else. Here, there, everywhere were bequests that meant nothing to him. Distant connections, four of them, were receiving sums that would care for them more than regally during their lifetimes. Old servants were getting pensions, and so were six dogs and three cats. Automatically as the lawyer's voice ran on Quarrendar was adding up the amounts, roughly but fairly accurately, and the fortune of Great-uncle Homer was drawing to its end without a mention of himself.

He smiled, almost in relief. It was all over now, Mr. Ethan Hulbert was leaning back in his chair and his finger had left the many-paged will.

" From the bequests which I have just declared you can realize that your Great-uncle Quarrendar carried into his last testament all the eccentricity for which he was noted during his lifetime. Each and every bequest is based upon some trait of his most individual character, peculiar as they may seem to the outsider. To me, as an old friend as well as his lawyer, they appear as a perfectly logical climax to his life. And now we come to perhaps the strangest bequest of all, the provision regarding yourself."

So Great-uncle Homer was leaving him something after all, something extraordinary, something well out of the common run of affairs. Great-uncle Homer had certainly been a remarkable man; he had left in the neighborhood of five million dollars and no one knew how he had obtained it.

"He leaves to you a summer hotel."

"A what?" exploded Quarrendar. "Great-uncle Homer had a place on Long Island and a ruined castle somewhere in Italy but I never heard of his owning a summer hotel."

"The Barque Haven Arms at Barque Haven on Cape Cod, Massachusetts," continued Mr. Hulbert, undisturbed. "It is a splendidly prosperous property of more than one hundred and fifty rooms catering to the best clientele. The location is charming and its arrangements are superb. I know, for I have enjoyed several visits with your great-uncle who invariably spent his summers there. You are doubtless aware of that."

"I never knew where he spent his summers or his winters. The last time I visited Great-uncle Homer I passed just one night on Long Island and then he asked me if I could be ready to take the eight-ten back to town in the morning. He had invited me for two weeks but I made the mistake of bringing him a present of some new neckties. He'd worn the same one for three years."

"The Barque Haven Arms, last valued at well over $250,000, is left to you." Mr. Hulbert appeared un-

conscious of interruption. "In another five years or so the property should double in value."

A cheerful sigh escaped Quarrendar. If inside of five years his legacy doubled, in ten it might very well be quadrupled. Great-uncle Homer in all probability would make him a millionaire yet.

Through day-dreams of roseate hue penetrated the voice of Mr. Ethan Hulbert, cool as ice.

"But there are conditions attached."

Quarrendar looked curious at once.

"Conditions?"

"You must carry out the full provisions of the will in regard to the bequest." Mr. Hulbert paused, cleared his throat and spoke with authority. "Three love matches made at the Barque Haven Arms this summer must culminate in marriage within a year, or you will lose the property."

"Say that"—it was fairly a gasp—"say that again, will you please?"

Mr. Hulbert's long fingers came together in the most judicial manner. He now spoke as though from the wool sack.

"I mentioned a few minutes ago that every bequest, no matter how odd, in your Great-uncle Quarrendar's will had its foundation in a certain trait of his character. You may not know it but your great-uncle in his later years was very much of the sentimentalist. It appears that he once had a severe disappointment in a love affair with a woman much younger than himself which accounts for his never entering matrimony. Be that

as it may one of his latest enthusiasms lay in the making of matches between young people."

Another strangled sound emerged from Stephen Quarrendar.

"He purchased the Barque Haven Arms some five years ago because of the number of attractive young people to be found there each summer. This information I received from him while he was in one of his expansive moods. He regarded it as an ideal field for his efforts. Every season since its purchase your great-uncle has been there doing all that he could in an unobtrusive manner to further the romances which he saw blossoming—the word is his—about him in the hotel. In confidence he told me that he considered himself responsible for at least fifteen matches between ideally-suited folk. You may call match-making his most cherished hobby, if you wish, and you will not be far wrong."

"Good old Great-uncle Homer," murmured Quarrendar. "So he had a heart, after all."

"Very much of one. You must remember that he never forgot his own unsuccessful romance. Incidentally, the daughter of the—ah—object of his affections is to receive the hotel should you fail to live up to the conditions imposed."

Once more the lawyer's finger rested on the cover of the will and its clauses were mysteriously being transmitted to him.

"If three love matches aren't made at the Barque Haven Arms this summer ——"

"Between June fifteenth and Labor Day, the end of the season in September."

"The hotel will go to——"

"Miss Mary Smith. I have been trying for some time to get in touch with her. Her mother, it appears, lived in Denver at the time of her death."

"Let me see if I have this straight." Despite the fact that the room appeared to be going around in slow circles Quarrendar began to tick off the points of the argument on his fingers while a mental picture of an old gentleman in badly-brushed broadcloth beaming at young people from under bushy eyebrows persisted in rising before him. "Three matches have to be made at Barque Haven between the fifteenth of this month and Labor Day, the first Monday in September. That is, three couples who are stopping at the hotel must be married within a year, having, we presume, fallen in love with each other while at the place."

"You analyze it correctly, Mr. Quarrendar."

"Or the hotel goes to Miss Mary Smith, of Denver." A sudden thought smote him and the Quarrendar smile was visited broadly upon Mr. Ethan Hulbert. It was gay, merry, filled with the insouciance of youth.

"Might I ask if my own engagement would count in the list?"

"It will not," was the instant reply. "Not only will it not count but it will be regarded as cancelling any matches made to that date. There is a separate paragraph in here"—the will rustled under a decisive tap—"to that effect. Your great-uncle expressed to me his

intention of preventing any obtaining of the hotel by your making—say, after two matches have been registered—the third for yourself. Such a match in his opinion might be open to question as a true romance and he wished to remove the hazard of this suggestion completely from your mind. Announcement of your own engagement at Barque Haven will result in the forfeiture of whatever matches may have been brought about previously. I am quoting the exact wording."

"Good old Great-uncle Homer!" almost shouted Quarrendar, oblivious to the solemnity of the occasion. "He certainly had his own way of going after things. Are there, by any chance, some more separate paragraphs in there?"

Mr. Hulbert placed his hand on the will and it looked for a moment as though he were about to take it up.

"There are. The possibility of your gaining the hotel by marriage is definitely removed by a second provision. If you should marry Miss Mary Smith, the competing legatee, the hotel will be sold and the proceeds devoted to the Quarrendar Foundation. This regulation applies not only to this summer but to any time in the future."

"So that," smiled Quarrendar gaily, "is Great-uncle Homer's little declaration of his views on fortune-hunting. If I lose the hotel I can't get it back by honorable matrimony with the winner. It would cost her the place, I gather."

"Precisely." Mr. Hulbert spoke more crisply than

ever. "That avenue your great-uncle desired to be absolutely blocked. He intended that when you marry it shall be for no ulterior motive. You can figure out for yourself, regarding the matter from a worldly standpoint, what Miss Mary Smith would stand to lose through such an alliance."

"If I ever meet her she'll greet my amiable remarks with a pronounced and highly sagacious chilliness," said Quarrendar. "And what is she like, by the way? Has she red hair and a devastating temper and does she carry a lasso and a revolver? You said she came from Denver, which was once a wagon camp surrounded by yelling Sioux."

"I am far from being acquainted with Miss Mary Smith as yet," returned Mr. Hulbert, somewhat stiffly. "I know only the name."

"And that isn't such a help in visioning the young lady."

"She has a middle name, possibly two if I recollect rightly. But all this is beside the question."

"I agree with you." Quarrendar's head came up brightly, determinedly, and his eyes sparkled with far more than their customary recklessness. "I certainly won't ever see her if I win the hotel and I'm not very likely to go hunting an introduction to her if I lose it. Great-uncle Homer has erected a very fine barrier of antagonism between us as it is, whether he meant to or not. So I'll just take on the job of winning the Barque Haven Arms without bothering about anything else and with plenty of thanks to Great-uncle Homer for

the chance. I can use a $250,000 summer hotel. You see, I'm flat broke."

"I beg your pardon?" By the look of polite astonishment which he permitted himself it appeared as though Ethan Hulbert had never known a client in that condition.

Quarrendar smiled cheerfully.

"I had some money in an importing house. That is up to a few days ago." It did not seem necessary to go into details of a modest inheritance, already tied up in business, an airless, cramped office and a wild longing at times to be free of the clack of typewriters and endless invoices. "I'd worked up to be assistant manager when the crash came. The Orient from which we imported most of our stuff took to producing civil wars and generals, instead of trade-goods so we've just put up the shutters. Don't worry, it wasn't a big house and you never heard of it. Even my friends don't know I'm flat yet. My share has gone in to help pay the creditors and I'm foot-loose and happy. I suppose I'm proprietor of the Barque Haven Arms, at least until September?"

The lawyer nodded. "A satisfactory salary is attached to the position. Mr. Arnold, the resident manager, has been at the hotel for years and you will have no worries connected with its actual management. If you wish to take a part in its operation that is your own affair. After all, your real task is to see that the three specified matches are made if you are to attain permanent possession."

The shadowy individual had appeared again in the room and seemed to be whispering something.

"Who?" inquired Mr. Hulbert. "Ah, yes!" He turned to Quarrendar. "I regret that it is not possible to prolong our interview. Two of my clients are waiting now with appointments to see me concerning the lamentable situation at White's Ferry to which the newspapers have been devoting so much space this last week. It seems that what practically amounts to a divorce-mill has been in operation there and that a large proportion of the separations have been granted by a judge on insufficient grounds and cannot stand the test of legality. A uniform divorce law I have always maintained ——"

Quarrendar rose, not too interested in Mr. Hulbert's views, however authoritative, on a uniform divorce law or in the problem of White's Ferry and its grist of severed relations.

"I shall be up on Labor Day myself to receive your final report," said Mr. Hulbert. "I happen to be one of the executors of the will. And now permit me to wish you the best of luck."

They shook hands in dignified ceremony, Mr. Hulbert precise to the last. At the door Quarrendar turned for a final remark, delivered with what was probably the first grin seen in that particular law office in a long time. He simply couldn't resist the rush of temptation.

"I'll have our best corner room reserved for you, Mr. Hulbert. And you needn't bother about trying to

locate Miss Mary Smith of Denver any longer. I'm going to win that summer hotel all for myself."

Had Mr. Hulbert actually smiled, a restrained, rather frosty smile, as he closed the door? Quarrendar couldn't exactly tell how he had received the outburst of youth and confidence. At all events, striding down the corridor with his shoulders thrown back, he felt supremely sure of himself. Only vaguely he was conscious that the elevator had descended and he was making his way towards the entrance which should let him out into a street of soaring towers and swift-rushing motors. Great-uncle Homer . . . Barque Haven Arms . . . three love matches . . . His thoughts were rapid, if still tinged with haze.

With an impression akin to shock he became aware that he had just bumped into someone who was stepping out of the revolving door. He had not quite realized that he ought to have been looking where he was going, this being New York City.

There followed a thud as a parcel struck the marble flagging and then a minor cascade of smaller packages and letters. A voice said " Oh! "

It was clear and young and vibrant. Quarrendar did not yet know to whom it belonged, as he was practically down on his hands and knees, attempting to scoop up the avalanche which littered the floor in an instinctive reaction from dreams to active deed.

Slim, exquisitely slim, ankles in silk. Trim feet in some kind of shiny shoes that had buckles on them. These Stephen Quarrendar couldn't help seeing as he

reached for the last of the fallen letters, feeling absurdly warm in the region of his collar. He had run into a young lady in the middle of her shopping. He hoped, as he slowly straightened up with the miscellany in his hands, that he'd be able to frame his apology in a sentence and bolt. Then he saw who it was.

The girl had violet eyes. This girl whom he had never seen before had violet eyes. They looked at him with the serenity of a practical young goddess rendering him mute for what was probably the first time in his life. The lissomeness of youth beckoned and allured. A trig hat spoke of confidence and of gay hues.

"Ah—er—ah!" he vouchsafed disjointedly. And again "Ah—er—ah!"

The violet eyes melted into laughter and small gloved hands went out to take the packages which Quarrendar still held awkwardly.

"Do you always try to walk out a door when another person is coming in?"

"Always. No, that is, not until now."

The girl saw a tall, well-knit young man evidently in the throes of amazement, and her glance became even more sympathetic.

"I'll take the other things now, please. And the letters. You haven't damaged anything, you know."

She had the whole collection back, the parcel and the packages and the handful of letters. She was giving him a capable little nod. She was going.

"You—you live in New York?"

The question, he knew as soon as it passed his lips, was sheer idiocy. The girl's forehead crinkled just the least.

" Yes, indeed. Thank you for picking up my things."

That was all. She had moved swiftly across the flagging and disappeared around the corner by the elevators before Stephen Quarrendar could muster a word. He hadn't made a single sensible remark to her; he had stood there helplessly like a wooden image. But the next time he saw her, the next time he saw her ——

" There isn't going to be any next time," he groaned. " You don't even know who she is or where she lives. She's gone forever."

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[II]

WAS every pretty girl in New York out on parade on the Avenue this morning? For five blocks this impression had been slowly but surely borne in on Stephen Quarrendar, swinging northward through the crowd with the facility of a young man who has spent most of his life in the metropolis. His long stride was that of an athlete, of a former halfback who, not so long ago had ripped his way through a broken field to where goalposts loomed. He used to smile then as flying forms dove at him and he was smiling now as flustered, jostling fellow-pedestrians missed him by inches with their elbows. After all, a saunter on Fifth Avenue during the outpouring of the noon hour is less a walk than a survival of the fittest.

Not for him a return by limousine to the precincts of the club. He wanted to do it on foot so as to allow himself time in which to think over the amazing events of the morning. He could still hear the dry, precise accents of Mr. Ethan Hulbert summing up the situation as created by Great-uncle Homer. Summer hotel. . . . Barque Haven. . . . $250,000 and going up. . . . Three love matches. . . . Labor Day. The words seemed to ring out in an endless litany as his heels came down on the pavement. Mary Smith. . . . Mary Smith. . . . Denver. . . . Undoubtedly he had plenty to think about on his blocks-long progress. He shook himself like a man coming out of slumber and just in time avoided colliding with a vision in green who was tripping blithely along.

She flashed a glance at him and passed. No longer was there any doubt of the information which his subconscious mind had been trying to impress on him. Every pretty girl in the city was out on the Avenue to-day and now. Shining eyes, shapely limbs, colorful scarves and gay frocks were appearing on all sides in an abundance that was a pleasure to the beholder. Quarrendar felt himself plunged into a panorama of graceful loveliness without being able to account for it. Perhaps it was the sunshine, mellow on street and building; perhaps it was the surrounding pageant which accounted for the sensation of well-being which pervaded him.

He felt most kindly towards the world and his fellow beings. He would like to do something for everyone.

He would like to take all of these sparkling-eyed promenaders to Barque Haven with him and see to it that they met and fell in love with attractive suitors. They ought to be in love; everybody ought to be in love. He did not realize that more than one head was turning to look again at the young man with the air of carefree recklessness who was striding up the Avenue as though it belonged to him. Now and again cynical rivals had spoken of Stephen Quarrendar as being just a bit too good-looking. They had neglected, however, to voice that view in his presence.

Someone waved to him from a motor and he sent back a friendly gesture in return. Mary Smith. . . . Summer hotel . . . Three love matches. . . . It would be cool at Barque Haven, cool and swept by salty breezes. White sails would dot blue-green waters and the little winds would last long into the dusk. He smiled upon the doorman who guarded the portal of the club at which he had now arrived.

"I am going to a better land. When Mr. Holly comes in tell him I am packing in my rooms. I feel like Columbus."

"Yes, sir." The doorman evinced no surprise that Mr. Quarrendar was feeling like Columbus. "I shall tell him, sir."

It was not, however, in Quarrendar's rooms, which looked as though they had been smitten by a cyclone of empty trunks, clothing, tennis rackets and golf cups, that he and Ted Holly were to be found in active discussion when the day had grown older. The Colonial

Club was proud of its roof-garden refreshment annex, an ideal spot for relaxation from care at any moment of the afternoon. Something tall and iced tinkled in the hand of each and Ted Holly had removed his nose-glasses and put them away in their case. He didn't want them popping off again in his astonishment.

Quarrendar had just come to the end of a long recital. "Have no fear, my faithful friend," he added affectionately. "You would have sat there a-quiver with wonder if you had been in my shoes. Our capable family lawyer was quoting statistics, and not delivering something he had made up out of his own head. Here I am,"—he made the ice sing pleasantly in the glass—"on the verge of an adventure such as I have dreamed of all my short but useful life."

"Barque Haven Arms," muttered Holly in the tone of one who is emerging from a trance. "I know the Barque Haven Arms. Spent a month there about two years ago. It's a beautiful place and packed with people all the time. On the Cape motor tour route. Gad, Steve, it's a perfect nest of romance!"

"Would you mind repeating that for my benefit?"

Quarrendar's humorous glance was turned to his companion who appeared to be struggling for words with which to explain a matter of reminiscence. All about them lay a sea of roofs from which rose shining spires and jutting, mammoth skyscrapers that climbed into the azure of afternoon. Streets below were canyons running aimlessly here and there until they found the dark strip of the river. Faintly came the sound of

sirens off the water where gallant ships proclaimed themselves to be taking the tide to glamorous ports and far. A bank of clouds, not to be outdone, drifted aloft on some mystery trail of its own. It was an afternoon on which to be young and alive and facing the future.

"You've never been to Barque Haven? I can't explain it to you. Just wait till you get there and you'll see for yourself. It's something in the atmosphere."

"What's in the atmosphere?"

"Romance," gurgled Holly, his lean face aglow. "Everybody falls in love with everybody else. I got engaged myself before I had any idea what was up. Maybe it's the moon, maybe there's a spell over the place. I don't know. Steve, you're in for all kinds of trouble."

A buoyant laugh answered him. "Good old Ted, you've removed a mighty weight from my mind. You're trying to inform me, are you not, that I have Great-uncle Homer's hotel as good as won already?"

"You can't help it. Hundreds and hundreds—well, dozens anyhow—of young people all falling for each other. That's what went on when I was there. The place won't change. It's a regular bureau of matrimony, that Barque Haven Arms."

So here was information—solid, first-hand information—on Great-uncle Homer's pet project. Ethan Hulbert had not seen fit to more than skim the surface of the situation in a logical and attorney-like manner. But then Mr. Ethan Hulbert was approaching late

middle age and was immersed in documents that had seals on them. Ted Holly was an earnest and a truthful young man whom he had known for years.

"But I notice that you didn't marry the girl."

Ted Holly shook his head.

"We had a regular old-fashioned quarrel and called it off. She didn't want to live in Chicago or something like that. But Barque Haven got me and you watch out or it'll get you too."

"Never." The statement was delivered in no uncertain tones. "Never, and for a third time ditto. That's a quaint legal word I picked up this morning. Look what it sets me back if I fall a victim to Friend Cupid this summer. There's enough trouble in the world without going and adding marriage to it."

Quarrendar paused. It seemed that he was again in the pageant of Fifth Avenue and that flower-like faces were smiling upon him.

"It's an odd thing, my faithful ally, but this metropolis must be producing them better and better every week. Just this morning——" In as graphic phrases as he could summon he launched into a description of the parade of fashion and beauty in which he had become involved. "And I don't quite see how to account for it," he concluded.

Ted Holly favored him with a penetrating glance. At last his nose-glasses were in their proper place and his air of sagacity was more pronounced than ever.

"I spent an hour at least on the Avenue about the time you must have been there. I didn't notice any-

thing particularly wonderful on exhibition. If you really want to know I'll tell you what's happened."

"Proceed. Continue. Or as you business men say, deliver me the goods as per specifications."

"You're in love."

"What?"

"You're in love." Ted Holly was going on remorselessly. "When a man's in love every girl he sees looks perfectly beautiful. He's always finding the face of the girl he's crazy about in every crowd. He hunts for it. Haven't I done it myself? Gad, Steve, you must have fallen hard!"

Quarrendar moved his chair back a trifle so that he could comfortably give vent to the burst of laughter which he felt welling up within him. The laugh never emerged. He simply sat staring at his companion, his mind racing. Was it true? Had he really been looking for the face of the girl with violet eyes all the way up the Avenue, not only hoping but praying that somewhere in those blocks of people he would find her?

He had. He most undoubtedly had.

But he would never find her.

Ted Holly was rising. He was an extremely active young man who fairly bounded from office to office on his trips to New York. He never left a table except in a hurry.

"Got an engagement at three," shot out Holly. "We might do a theatre this evening and then I have to take the midnight for Philadelphia on more busi-

ness. If you're really in the toils at last, my congratulations and no questions asked. And nothing further about Barque Haven. You'll find it all out by your lonesome when you get there."

He left behind him a thoughtful young man who looked out over the roofs and towards the river without much idea of what he was seeing. Presently Quarrendar rose to his feet with the old smile faintly showing. He was trying to grin in the face of a difficult proposition.

"It can't be as serious as all that in a meeting of less than two minutes," he assured himself slowly. "And I certainly can't go out and wear down the pavements trying to find her with this Barque Haven job to attend to. Oh well, a cigarette is good for this frame of mind."

Automatically his hand groped in a side pocket and closed on crumpled paper.

"No, I'd just better forget it all."

It was not a package of cigarettes which he had brought to view. It was a letter—a bill. Also it was plainly addressed to:

Miss Jane Devens,
Jane and Georgette Shoppe,
26A East Fiftieth Street,
New York City.

"And here she is," said Stephen Quarrendar.

He had scooped half a dozen letters off the floor

amid the parcels that morning and had thrust them into his pocket while he reached down for the larger wreckage. Then he had produced the letters and handed them over, wordless and enthralled. But this one letter his fumbling hand must have missed. Here she was—both name and address.

"An honest man returns mail which he finds to its owner—instantly. Boy!" A uniformed youth in the far corner of the roof garden came forward at a run. "Get me my hat. And ring for the elevator and keep on ringing till it comes."

East Fiftieth Street was only a matter of blocks away and, in a short time Quarrendar was standing before an expanse of plate glass which bore in a long curlicue of gold letters the sign he sought. "Jane and Georgette Shoppe" it declared to all passers-by. He had come to the right place, and without the loss of a moment, but none the less his face lengthened perceptibly. No chic costumes were draped in folds behind the glass or glorified tranquil-faced models with waxen smiles. There was only a curtain separating an empty window from the space behind, and through the parting in its center he descried packing-boxes.

As his glance veered disconsolately it came upon the notice placarded in a corner of the entrance door. The wording "Will Reopen in September" was brief and to the point. Now he would never know whether he had arrived an hour or a day too late.

There didn't seem to be anything to do but go back to the club and finish packing for Barque Haven.

He should, of course, re-address the missing letter and mail it to the shop, in which case it might be as well to put Miss Jane Devens completely out of mind. He would be gone for three months and there wouldn't be much excuse for calling on his return. Or—and here the feet of Stephen Quarrendar began to lag on the homeward trail—he could return and slip the document through the letter slit in the door or under the sill and at some future date call to inquire if it had reached its owner.

Three blocks from " Jane and Georgette " he turned and began to retrace his steps, again with a long and eager stride. He was responsible for the safety of this practically purloined missive. An honest man would take the course he was about to pursue, that of seeing personally that the letter was left at the shop. Also an honest man's conscience would not rest unless, in September, he dropped in to inquire if the property had reached its owner. In September his task would be over, he would undoubtedly be the sole owner of a $250,000 summer hotel and the " Jane and Georgette Shoppe " would be reopened.

It was open now. Its door was wide and within a dainty figure was sitting on a packing-case just dropping a collection of keys into a handbag. Miss Jane Devens was back.

She looked up as a shadow fell across the threshold and Quarrendar gave thanks. No wordless muttering this time; he felt alert, confident and at ease. His luck was in.

"I'm afraid you may not remember me, but this morning I disrupted your entrance into a building downtown. And only a few minutes ago I found this"—the letter was outstretched—" in my pocket. It must have become lost in the scramble so of course I came right around to return it to you."

"Heavens," said the young lady and at her smile he thrilled all over, "it's only a bill. I get plenty of those. I rather wish you'd thrown it away."

"An honest man——"

"Please," begged the most alluring lips he had ever seen, "don't read me a lesson. I do pay my bills even when I'm going away for the summer." The violet eyes were winsome. "You've caught me just in time, haven't you? I'm the Jane end and Georgette is sailing to-morrow for Paris to do our autumn buying."

He breathed a fervent prayer that Georgette would stay over there not only for the autumn but for the winter and spring buying as well. Miss Jane Devens, after greeting him with a frank smile, appeared to be quite willing to carry on a conversation. Was it possible that she too regarded the morning's mishap as an introduction?

"Got to be trotting along now," remarked a third voice, whose owner had been standing carelessly in the corner by the window and consequently had escaped notice. He was a young man about Quarrendar's age with pleasant, well-molded features, a light malacca stick and a general air of outdoor health and poise. His tan was of a deep bronze and his smile flashed

agreeably. Also he seemed to be completely at home in the Jane and Georgette Shoppe. "Glad I ran into you at luncheon. We'll have another sometime."

He nodded cordially to Quarrendar and moved towards the door. The girl waved her hand to him.

"I'll be at the boat to see you off," she called. "Saturday, you're going, isn't it?"

"If I don't find something down at the office to upset it. London, Berlin and points east. Business calls."

His parting words fell lightly and Quarrendar was alone with the girl. Whoever the likable stranger might be he was now out of the way and apparently about to put some three thousand miles between himself and the young lady he had been addressing. That was perfectly all right. There was something vaguely familiar about his features that set Quarrendar to wondering where he had seen or met him before. New York is not such a large city, after all. But he would have to dismiss all such extraneous meditation and say something, and that rapidly, if he wanted to prolong his meeting with Jane Devens, whose shop he had invaded.

"So,"—he surveyed the premises, pretending not to notice the shapely foot that was swinging to and fro before him—"this is your own shop? Dresses and all that? It looks like an ideal place, doesn't it?"

"Hats and frocks," said Miss Devens. "And it looks like the devil right now if you ask me."

He had struck the wrong note somehow. Miss Jane

Devens was not at all the kind of person to whom the obvious appealed. Under that piquant hat of hers he sensed a keen little mind. She was loveliness, with ideas of her own.

"It does look a bit torn up," he retrenched in haste, "but so does my own place right now. You were saying, weren't you, that you were going away for the summer vacation?"

"I'm travelling with the Jane and Georgette specialties if you can call that a vacation." He decided that he liked her laugh better each time he heard it. There was friendship in it and a brave gayety for undertone. "That is, I was all ready to travel, but it's been unavoidably postponed. I'm all packed up and no place to go."

From the bag beside her she produced a mystery in silver that turned out to hold cigarettes and lit one.

"They promised me exhibit room in a hotel at Narragansett. And now they've wired me not to come. It's gone to some big modiste instead, I suppose."

Dimly he saw the vivid attraction of Miss Jane Devens through the haze of her cigarette. He remembered now. All the large hotels at the fashionable resorts had shops in them, filled with the latest models from New York and Paris. She had been disappointed at the eleventh hour, perhaps her whole summer's opportunity was gone, but this girl was smiling and her head was high.

It was inspiration, nothing less, which came to him. Certainly this flood of blazing light that seemed to go

through his brain could not be regarded as orderly thought.

"My name is Stephen Quarrendar," he burst out. "I have a summer hotel of my own, the Barque Haven Arms on Cape Cod. It's a splendidly prosperous property of more than a hundred and fifty rooms catering to the best clientele. The arrangements are superb. A beautiful place and packed with people all the time. On the Cape motor tour route. It's a perfect nest of ——"

Just in time he recollected where he was and stopped. It was enough to have had the careful descriptive sentences of Mr. Ethan Hulbert pop into his head without adding those of Ted Holly. But the impression had been made. He enjoyed the full and undivided attention of Miss Jane Devens who probably thought he had gone crazy.

"You're out of a place to show your stock, aren't you? Well"—he nerved himself for the climax—"the Barque Haven Arms has one of the finest exhibit rooms in the country. You'll do a rushing business with the best kind of customers. It's at your disposal if you care to come up."

He didn't know if the Barque Haven Arms had any such thing as exhibit space or not. But it would have if this startled young lady said "Yes." It would have whatever her lightest wish might command.

The girl was regarding him levelly.

"Who," she said with a queer laughing lilt in her voice, "did you say you were?"

"Stephen Quarrendar." She must have caught less than half of the rush of explanation which had been pouring from him. "Owner of the Barque Haven Arms. It's a splendidly prosperous property of——"

"You said that before."

"On the Cape motor tour route."

"I heard that too." Again the note of laughter. Miss Jane Devens raised the hand with the cigarette in it. "I really think I did get the idea."

"And you'll consider it? Seriously?" Quarrendar felt his pulse commence a mad gallop. Was it within the bounds of possibility that he would have this glorious young lady under the same roof—his own roof—with him all summer? He knew now that it really had been inspiration, which had come to him.

"Remember, you said you didn't have any place to go?"

"I certainly haven't." She continued to regard him in the most friendly fashion. "I was really in the blues about it. Now let me see"—a slim finger went to her lips in private musing—"on the Cape——"

"With over a hundred and fifty permanent guests. There'll be hundreds more passing through."

"I suppose so."

"It would be a magnificent proposition. I've been in business and I know."

"I suppose it would."

"And"—he added craftily—"you couldn't very well let your partner Georgette down, could you, while she's away?"

Later he congratulated himself that here was the argument which told. The violet eyes were amused, gay, alert with a little imp of mischief in their depths.

"The Barque Haven Arms sounds very attractive." She paused, surveying him for what seemed an eternity. "I'll come."

Quarrendar almost choked, so overpowering was the relief of complete triumph. He wanted to shake Miss Jane Devens violently by the hand but somehow refrained. His luck had lasted to the end. He couldn't believe this remarkable thing had happened yet.

"We can discuss arrangements once you're up there." Instinctively he knew that Jane Devens would come only on the strictest business basis and he liked her the more for it. "Our rates are low." They certainly would be—for her. The manager would tear his hair when he saw what Miss Devens was charged for board and exhibit space. "I'm going up myself tomorrow and I'll see that everything is ready."

"This is Tuesday, isn't it? Let's call it the first of next week. I'll have some things to attend to in town."

"On Monday," said Quarrendar, meaning every word, "I shall be waiting for you."

A dazed recollection of a small hand meeting his in the clasp of perfect camaraderie and Quarrendar was out again in the sunshine of a June afternoon—a very superior, glowing sort of sunshine that made the circulation tingle. He had put over an inspiration on the spur of the moment. By sheer force of eloquence he had persuaded Miss Jane Devens, perhaps even before

she had had time to think, to pack up her trunks and come to Barque Haven. He had rescued her from the depths of despair and given her the chance of a gorgeous summer. He ought to resemble Galahad himself in her eyes. For the second time that day his heels were beating out a tune on the pavement but this one was a lyric.

Jane Devens. Jane . . . Jane . . . Barque Haven . . . Great-uncle Homer . . . Jane.

"By all that's high and handsome," exploded Stephen Quarrendar, "I'll see that she doesn't marry anyone while she's up there with me!"

Two blocks later he exploded again.

"And if we should get serious about each other up there bang go the matches I've made! I never thought of that!"

[III]

IT was morning—a sparkling morning—at Barque Haven. White and rambling in the sunshine the Barque Haven Arms stood upon its private knoll and looked out across a gently-descending lawn to a sea of sapphire tranquillity. Later on the expanse of unruffled blue would be stippled by the flight of sails, and young laughter and song would drift landwards, gay sweaters would crowd the railings of the veranda and the wall along the crescent drive below, but at present all was peace. Land and sea lay serene, mellowed by golden rays that floated into haze on the far horizon. The Barque Haven Arms stood there, drowsing pleasantly, and waited for the activities of the day to commence.

"Monarch of all I survey," lazily remarked the young man who was leaning against one of the pillars of the veranda. "It is a restful thought and has a charm of its own. This place is all that could be hoped for and more. I shall be delighted to own it."

He found it enchanting just to let his gaze wander over the picture before him while the sense of virtue that comes with early rising spread through his being. He exhibited a countenance of extreme good humor as though the little cares and worries of the world could not approach him to-day. Within doors the dining room of the Barque Haven Arms was beginning to fill with contingents of other early risers and it would not be long before his meditations would be interrupted by cheerful groups off for the links, the tennis courts and the sea. Also the wicker rocking chairs of the veranda would creak to the clicking of knitting needles. Let them all come; he was having a quarter of an hour of blissful musing, undisturbed.

"And to-day is Monday," he reminded himself. This morning she would be here. Miss Jane Devens would be here. Stephen Quarrendar began to wish that there were less than sixty minutes to an hour.

Wheeling gracefully above the waves that lay hardly more than a stone's-throw from the Barque Haven Arms a colony of half-a-dozen gulls were prospecting for breakfast, their wings shimmering as they swooped and rose again. Far down on the strip of beach the sandpipers would be trotting briskly about their own business at this hour. Miss Jane Devens would enjoy

the gulls and the sandpipers. She would like everything about the Barque Haven Arms, he felt sure, from its widespread façade to its quiet green roof where tiny dormer windows gave on the endless miles of ocean. He had talked to middle-aged, hearty Mr. Arnold, the permanent manager, and Mr. Arnold had agreed with him cordially that the Barque Haven Arms needed an exhibit of the latest summer frocks and hats. There had been a day or so with the books and an inspection of the spacious, restful premises. There had been many introductions to the guests beneath his rafters and much conversation about the weather which, it seemed, was always like this in June—tingling, heady, gorgeous. This was a real job which Great-uncle Homer had thrust upon him and one in which he felt completely at home. You strolled about casting genial nods and remarks to people and seeing that everyone from Room 1 to Room 150 was comfortable and having a good time. Bright eyes smiled upon him and soft lips murmured friendly things. In a few days more he would start to go to work seriously.

Already, while he watched, the low wall along the drive—the meeting-place of the younger generation—was beginning to collect its morning gathering. Here they sat at all hours of the day and far into the evening as well, tossing bobbed heads and twisting nicely-shaped shoulders, and flinging showers of mirth about. Stalwart collegians who played on football teams and pulled oars in crews sat down with them arm-in-arm and plied them with new brands of cigarettes and

made them shriek with laughter. They were the life of the Barque Haven Arms and they were proud of it, especially the Eton-cropped young lady of some twenty summers who in white knickers and vivacious sports sweater was now leading the revels. A bedlam of shouts greeted her as she gyrated through a few of the latest dance steps at nine o'clock in the morning. Etheldreda Satterfield was like that. With her tip-tilted nose and her startlingly brisk conversation she made Quarrendar feel just the least bit uneasy.

She smiled up at him and waved her hand. He waved back nonchalantly, the gesture of the owner of a large hotel who greets a charming, youthful guest but keeps her carefully at a distance. Etheldreda was a rebellious package of human dynamite which might explode at any moment.

"Young fools," stated a voice at his elbow.

Everything about the speaker seemed to droop—long nose, unkempt moustache, discouraged chin. His golfing togs hung baggily upon a tall, lank frame and his left cheek bore evidence that he had started the day inauspiciously by cutting himself shaving. Mr. Cyrus K. Barnes, one of the season patrons of the Barque Haven Arms, could never have been described as a happy man.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Barnes?" inquired Quarrendar blithely. A steady guest must be treated with all politeness by a rising young proprietor. "I'm afraid I didn't quite catch what you were saying. I didn't hear you come up behind me, you know."

"Young fools," reiterated Mr. Cyrus Barnes, jerking his thumb in the direction of the frolicsome group on the wall. "Dancing all night. Jazzing it up all day. Raising merry hob. Let 'em run loose when they're young and see what we get."

Quarrendar beamed his friendliest upon the moody one. He couldn't help but feel a certain sympathy for anyone who started the day in such a frame of mind. Mr. Barnes needed some rapid cheering up by an expert.

"Action, Mr. Barnes, for one thing, and for another—er,"—he hardly knew how the word slipped into his mind—"romance."

"And what comes after romance?" Promptly and funereally Mr. Barnes answered his own question. "Matrimony."

"Well," observed Quarrendar, "there's nothing so much the matter with that." He was quite certain there wasn't. Three romances culminating in that very state must be achieved at Barque Haven by the first week in September; it required no memorandum to recall the fact to mind. "Just look around you and think of all the people you know who are simply revelling in matrimony. It's the natural condition of man. Why, there's something wrong with anybody who doesn't ——"

"Bah!" came the snort which interrupted Quarrendar in the middle of what he considered an excellent bit of selling talk. "Bah, I said. You want some good advice? You're young. You're attractive.

You've got your health. You look as though you had money. Don't let any of these fortune-hunting females around this hotel grab hold of you. Matrimony, young man? Kisses and roses one minute and the next—what?"

Once more Mr. Barnes gave himself a satisfactory answer. "Alimony and the front page of the newspapers. Rotten likenesses too."

"With all due deference to age and experience," said Quarrendar engagingly, "something informs me that your views are not held by all our fellow-men. Something also informs me that more than one delightful match—shall we say three in all?—will be observed in the making here at Barque Haven under the summer moon."

Mr. Barnes appeared on the point of being swallowed up in further dismal philosophy but instead his rather watery eyes took on a look of agitation and his Adam's apple became unduly prominent. The beautifully-dressed figure in the doorway which opened upon the hotel foyer gave one the impression of smartness, seductive and blandishing. Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers this morning was a picture of perfection; another moment and her gaze was upon them and she seemed to float forward.

From beside Quarrendar came a stifled groan. "Married three husbands. Divorced 'em all. Remember what I said." Hob-nailed golfing shoes clattered on the steps and Mr. Barnes was gone, heading down the driveway at a pace that was practically a gallop.

A grove of pines some seventy-five yards distant appeared to be his immediate objective.

"Isn't he the *funniest* man?" The alluring Adrienne Chalmers was very close to Quarrendar now and he caught the full battery of her eyes. Her hair was the color of honey, and honey also lay in her italicized accents. No wonder there had been husband after husband in her life. "You might *really* think that he was running away from me. You wouldn't run away from *me,* would you?"

"No indeed. Oh, no indeed," Quarrendar smiled upon her with friendship. It hadn't occurred to him until this moment that the romances of Barque Haven need not be confined exclusively to the younger generation. Here was an ally, and a fascinating one, in the great adventure. "I can't imagine anyone running away from you, Mrs. Chalmers."

"Adrienne," cooed the vision. "Adrienne, Stephen. We've known each other for days."

He felt a smooth arm slipped within his. Adrienne, the lovely, was accepting him as her big brother or something.

"You remind me so of Heyward," she pursued innocently. "It's positively *uncanny.* I think it's the way your hair curls up the *teeniest* bit on your forehead. Heyward was my very first."

"He must have been charming," Quarrendar interrupted hurriedly. "Fortunate fellow, I'd call him. But Mr. Barnes that we were speaking of—there's a man of real character for you. A bit off on the pessi-

mistic side, perhaps, but a heart of gold. Mr. Arnold tells me that he's absolutely an ideal guest. You can't help liking him."

"He *is* sweet," murmured Adrienne. "I've tried *so* hard to have a good long talk with him but he just *won't* stay in one place more than a minute. You're not *that* way at all, are you? I think I could like you *very* much, Stephen."

The world's fastest worker, it dawned abruptly on Quarrendar, was at his side. The bewitching Adrienne was the sort of clinging vine that twines itself around every stalwart oak it encounters.

"You don't really know me yet, Mrs. Chalmers, or you'd ——"

"Adrienne, Stephen."

"That is to say, I'm full of all kinds of faults. Hate to get up in the morning and never normal much before eleven. My temper isn't too good at any time. Why, if you truly knew me ——"

"I'd only known Paul three days," came the honeyed voice. "He was *simply* the best of them all. Paul was my most recent."

"It must be wonderful," said Quarrender sincerely, "to be married. But I'm a long way still from the morning hate which comes, I am informed, about the end of the third year. I think I prefer things as they are—lots of golf and nobody to tell me not to go out in the rain without a taxicab."

"No," mourned Adrienne, "I don't suppose it's *any* use at all to talk to you. You men are *so* strong and

soulless. But don't forget me until I see you again. We'll have to have the *longest* chat together sometime."

The soulful gaze wandered casually towards the grove into whose shadows Mr. Barnes had vanished. No movement was to be seen beyond the swaying of boughs in a gentle breeze off the water. A shrug of her beautiful shoulders and Adrienne passed through the portal of the Barque Haven Arms, leaving behind her a disconcerted and rather startled young man.

" She would have married you this afternoon if you had encouraged her," he told himself with a slight shudder. " She is charming, delightful and appallingly direct. She collects husbands the way some women collect china. Our friend Mr. Barnes had better stay in the woods all day if he wants to keep her off his trail."

Almost immediately a brighter look appeared on Quarrendar's countenance. It might not be the melancholy Cyrus but Adrienne most certainly wasn't going to miss out on the matrimonial prospects of the Barque Haven Arms during her summer's stay. List one possibility for the three romances of Great-uncle Homer. He flung back his shoulders and faced the morning sunlight, the joy of contest flooding him. He intended to win.

Then his eyes opened to their widest extent and at the same time his ear-drums were assailed by a cataclysm of horn-tootings and brake-squealing which was rapidly approaching the pillars of the Barque

Haven Arms. The largest roadster he had ever seen, its body a glittering expanse of aluminum, its wheels a shouting scarlet, was sweeping up the drive straight for the portico where he stood. At the wheel sat a rotund, firmly set-up young man with a jovial face in which shone round eyes fairly snapping with activity. His hand was on the piston of the siren announcing his arrival in no uncertain terms.

A startled veranda, filled now to the last chair with fashionable and flawlessly attired guests, watched him brake to a halt in front of the younger generation on the wall. Little murmurs of surprise and curiosity arose. No visitor such as this had ever been seen before in the precincts of the Barque Haven Arms. Mechanically Quarrendar strode down the steps to meet the incoming cyclone.

Etheldreda Satterfield, with her hands in the pockets of her knickerbockers, and her boyish, cropped head mutinously poised was the first person the newcomer saw.

"Hello, sonny," he hailed cordially. "Better look out or you'll swallow that cigarette. Is this the joint they call the Barque Haven Arms?"

"It is," shot out Etheldreda briskly. She snapped the end of the maligned cigarette carelessly over her shoulder and producing her lipstick made a few deft manipulations. After which she put her hands on her slender hips and inspected the newcomer as though he were some new species of insect. She looked even more boyish than ever.

"Kind Christopher!" shouted the young man in the aluminum roadster. "If it isn't a girl! Excuse me, lady, but I'm from a place where women look like women."

It is not safe to meddle with a member of the younger generation. Eagerly the bright-hued mass of Miss Etheldreda Satterfield's contemporaries on the wall waited to hear what would be the answer of their leader to so frank a remark. A dash of fire came into Etheldreda's eyes and her chin went up.

"In that case," she remarked, "you might run your sardine can down the road. A little oil in it and the picture would be perfect."

She was ready for battle. She did not like this genial young man, and with the directness of the modern maiden she was telling him so. Yet he beamed on her more cheerily than ever.

"Beg pardon if I stepped on your toes, lady. Don't pull a gun on me."

Still smiling he stepped from the roadster and faced his opponent. He bore himself unconcernedly under the chorus of a panama hat with an orange band, a deep purple silk shirt and plus fours that howled of all the plaids known to heraldry. The thing called personality pulsated from him.

"A gun?" inquired Miss Etheldreda Satterfield crushingly. "What would be the matter with a fire hose?"

Just in time Quarrendar projected himself into the conversation. He liked on sight this bulky young man

into whose rotundity verbal harpoon after harpoon was being hurled while he continued to beam at the young lady he had unwittingly angered.

"Quarrendar—Stephen Quarrendar," he introduced himself hastily. "I'm the—er—owner of the Arms. You were looking for it, I think?"

The bullet head nodded brightly. The member known as the "glad hand" was extended. Quarrendar felt that his fist had come into the grip of a python, one radiating good fellowship.

"Name's Weedon," came booming tones. "Bill Weedon of Walla Walla, State of Washington. Lumber in large quantities. So you own this shack, hey?" He cast a shrewd glance over the tranquil, rambling, green-roofed bulk of the hotel. "You look pretty young for the proprietor of a place like this, but that's all right by me. You bet your grandfather's wooden leg!"

A little dazed Quarrendar evinced no immediate intention of wagering his grandfather's artificial limb. If he had looked behind him he would have seen a thrill of horror run through the line of wicker chairs on the veranda. Cigars puffed by prosperous, conservative gentlemen were gathering ashes and not a knitting needle clicked. The Barque Haven Arms had always prided itself highly on the exclusiveness of its clientele.

"Just rolling around what they call the Cape. Thought it was time I gave the East a once-over," went on Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla. "This

looks like a swell dump to me. Can you jingle a gong and get me a room and bath?"

"I can." The round eyes of Bill Weedon were frankly friendly; the face from which they looked honest and above sham. It was impossible to imagine him as on anything but the best of terms with all mankind. "For as long as you want."

Weedon grinned.

"Till you put me out, brother. I've been put out of lots better places than this."

"I don't doubt it," murmured a clear voice. "And why not?"

"Oh, by the way," said Quarrendar, turning swiftly to quell further incipient battle. "Miss Etheldreda Satterfield—may I present Mr. Weedon?"

Gracefully, yet with an air of infinite distance, the leader of the younger generation accepted the introduction.

"Charmed," she said.

"Me too," shot out the pride of Walla Walla. "We'll have lots of fun in the bowling alley." From the luggage rack on the back of the roadster he wrenched a pair of shining new kitbags and tossed them to the drive. "Lift your feet, boy!" he shouted to a uniformed figure on the veranda. "I'll just slam this bus into the garage and be back in a minute. Like to take the ride, sister?"

Once more he beamed his best, evidently expecting a favorable answer. Etheldreda, with the dangerous light still in her eyes, gave a small but evident nod of

negation and the aluminum marvel leaped away, roaring.

"The big fish," she said distinctly, too distinctly. "I'll have him eating out of my hand if it takes me all summer."

She was beside Quarrendar as he walked back to the pillared steps, her cropped head high.

"Why weren't you down on the wall with all the crowd last night?" she asked suddenly. "I was looking for you."

For the second time that morning a feeling of uneasiness swept over him. Etheldreda was regarding him with an unusually bright, alert look. In all her young life she had never known what it was not to get what she wanted. Was it true, as the dismal Mr. Barnes had muttered, that he was attractive? He only knew that he wanted to part company with this wild child as rapidly as possible.

"These college heroes bore me," proceeded Etheldreda. "They can't talk about anything except the great touchdown they made against somebody or other. I want to meet someone who's done things. I want something to happen."

It was merely youth, craving excitement as always, Quarrendar assured himself as he watched the vivid sports sweater go around the corner of the veranda. He sincerely hoped that was all it might be. Etheldreda had left him with a swift, unexplained flutter but her parting glance lingered. There was challenge in it. He couldn't quite understand it. And then all

his ponderings and uneasiness disappeared like mist before a keen, gladdening wind.

The Barque Haven Arms bus was returning from the junction whither it had gone to meet the morning train from New York and in it sat a single passenger.

The sky, which had been a glorious azure before, became bluer. The wind off the limitless ocean had in it the softness of a caress. Odd that he had not noticed until now how fleet and free the gulls were circling, white symbols of contentment that seemed to fly always in pairs. Softly the sunshine bathed the veranda of the Barque Haven Arms, sweeping the slope of its green roof and glinting golden on the rows of its windows. From the grove the pungent fragrance of the pines came on a wayward breeze. He had been told the truth that day in distant, clangorous, money-mad New York. Barque Haven had a spell of its own to cast upon all who tarried for long amid its tranquillity.

He looked again to make sure that this was Miss Jane Devens, really arriving. He cast aside his cigarette and went down the steps to meet her.

Five minutes later he was standing beside a slender young lady in the trimmest of travelling dresses at the desk in the foyer. He had himself dipped the pen in the ink for her. She was glorifying the white page of the register with the announcement of her coming. She would be a guest of his for the whole summer, a halcyon time, ever to be treasured in memory.

"I'll blot it for you," he smiled. "As the owner

of the Barque Haven Arms I shall esteem it my privilege to perform the first service in your honor. And the pen ought to turn to gold."

A clear little laugh answered him. The violet eyes were dancing.

"But you're not the owner yet."

"What's that?" he got out in utter surprise. "Who told you anything of the sort?"

The slim hand of Miss Jane Devens strayed from the pen, its duty done. Stephen Quarrendar looked upon the page it had touched and felt that the flooring of the foyer must be opening under his feet. There in a firm, straightforward hand lay the signature of the girl he had carried away with the fervor of his invitation to Barque Haven.

"You've only known me under my business name," he heard her gay voice. "Of course, you must have expected me to arrive some time this summer. And I always register from my old home town."

Stephen Quarrendar said nothing. He could only stand and stare at the line of writing which read:

Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith, Denver, Colorado.

[IV]

ONCE it had been the sun-parlor, spacious and all in white, through whose windows one caught the vista of the sea. But now it was a galaxy of color, gleaming in rows of scarlet, emerald, yellow and bronze folds that blossomed along the walls or hung enticingly behind the glass of the exhibition cases for which Stephen Quarrendar had sent all the way to Boston. Dresses, this summer, were of many and gorgeous shades. So were the hats—tiny and insouciant—which beckoned to the eye, bobbing securely on the stands they graced. The Jane and Georgette Shoppe carried its own atmosphere with it wherever it went, a fresh, harmonious air of youth. To buy here would be a positive pleasure.

The young lady in the lavender smock who had just

accompanied a customer to the door returned to the spindle-legged table doing duty as an office desk and opened the pages of a ledger whose columns already displayed a mass of entries. For two days now the Barque Haven partner of Jane and Georgette had seen a throng of visitors poising her hats on their bobbed tresses or emerging from behind her curtains clad in summery frocks, to revel in the images the mirror gave back to them.

"Business is roaring," she stated. "Jane and Georgette are being positively borne aloft on a wave of prosperity. And there are people who told me once that I wouldn't be a success. Away with them!"

For a moment she inspected the columns of the ledger before she reached for an order blank from the pile that decorated the table. While a glowing morning summoned to beach and links she was attending strictly to her job.

"Out there in the harbor one of the fastest catboats known to the Cape is rocking at her moorings without a hand at her helm," volunteered a voice above her downbent head. "Also one of the most rip-snorting sailing breezes ever is flurrying the water beyond."

The girl looked up to meet the gaze of a frankly eager, frankly pleasant and frankly direct young man. Surprise was flecking little lights across the violet eyes.

"Hello, Mary Jane Devens Smith."

"Hello, Stephen."

He liked the way she said it, the gallant friendship it implied. The rush of white sails over water that

foamed, the tang of salt-laden winds would be only half complete without this slender girl beside him.

"What do you say to a couple of hours of life on the bounding wave? We'll both get wet but that won't matter. It's good for the complexion if not for the clothes."

Smiling cheerfully he leaned over and closed the ledger. Again came the delectable curve of her lips. The golden bronze of summer suns had tinged her cheeks and somehow must have clustered, too, in her hair.

"Last night it was the most remarkable starlight known to the Atlantic coast," she informed him. "And the night before that it was the coolest sea breeze that ever wandered through a pine grove you wanted to show me."

"You don't know what you missed. Both times."

"I have to go over my stock and the accounts," she said. "Until I get things completely settled."

"Work wasn't made for you. It was made for stalwart, upstanding tireless young men like myself."

"I like it," she stated candidly, her eyes sparkling as they swept the ranks of color that girdled the walls. "I'm not up here for a vacation the way the rest of your guests are. I'm here, among other things, to sell dresses and hats."

"But you can't work all the time. It's bad for the brain. It stiffens the limbs and contracts the muscles of the heart. It dulls the conversation and makes one forget which is the right fork to use with the salad."

"And when I'm not working"—the girl's gaze was very clear—"I intend to be protecting the interests of Mary Smith."

"At last," observed Quarrendar amiably, "we are getting down to cases as our mutual friend Mr. Ethan Hulbert would observe. I have tried all the arts of blandishment to lure you off by yourself where we could get this matter settled. I don't have to inquire if you know the provisions of that rather original will?"

"I was just going in to see Mr. Hulbert when you knocked all the packages out of my hand that day."

"But I picked them up, didn't I? How was I to know I was assisting the missing heiress? I think I shall rechristen that sailboat the 'Mary Jane.' Which are you to-day, anyhow, Miss Jane Devens or Miss Mary Smith?"

"I'm both. Or either, whichever way I happen to feel." The brown-dusky head went up. "What do you think of that?"

"Nothing," he grinned. "I prefer to call you Jane. The name of Mary Smith raises recollections we both should prefer to keep buried. At the moment you and I ought to be heading for the open sea with a booming canvas hurtling us over the vasty depths."

"I thought," said the girl levelly, "that you mentioned something about our getting down to cases. This happens to be one of my serious mornings. No man ought to spend his time hanging around a hat and frock shop even if it is the best on the Cape."

"You can take me seriously then. When I came in here I intended to ask you something important. What happens now that Stephen Quarrendar and Mary Smith, both legatees of a large summer hotel, are under the same roof? I intend to go right ahead and win the Barque Haven Arms for young Mr. Quarrendar."

"And so do I—for Mary Smith."

"So it's war between us? To the last arrow of Friend Cupid?"

"If you want to call it that." A determined, if small, chin gave a hint of danger. "We both want the same hotel, don't we? You mean to try to make three matches this summer to win it, I suppose?"

"I do. I most certainly do." He had thought when he offered Miss Jane Devens harborage in the Barque Haven Arms that he was going to see a great deal of her. He was going to be with her night and day. Now she had turned out to be Miss Mary Smith of Denver and things would be very, very different. "And not to seem too confident about it, but it will be my hotel in September."

"Really?"

Recklessly he plunged on, prepared to overwhelm this tantalizing young lady by the force of his arguments. Then they could be the best of friends and companions, the barrier that lay between them forgotten.

"I'm in possession of the place right now, Mary Jane or Jane Mary. It'll be easy enough for me to put over all the romances I need. I can throw promising

couples together. I'll know everything that's going on."

"If you think that the proprietor of a hotel will know more about his guests than a girl in a frock and hat shop inside it you are very much mistaken," she informed him, her eyes challenging.

"I'll make match after match ——"

"And I'll stop them. Every one."

The slender figure before him was instinct with a cool defiance. Here was a girl who could be a keen opponent if she put her mind to it. And she was giving plenty of evidence that the gauntlet had been flung down and accepted.

"How?"

"Stephen," was the answer, "you get out of this room."

As light as a swallow the lavender smock had fluttered to the door and there stood Mary Jane Devens Smith with one hand holding back the entrance curtain.

"I don't understand." He pronounced his words with distinctness. "What's the tremendous idea of tossing me out into the cold, Jane?"

"My real name is Mary—Mary Smith. Remember?"

"I shall call you Jane as long as I feel like it. I don't intend to think of you as Mary Smith."

"You'll have to. This way out, Stephen."

The tiny imp of mischief which dwelt somewhere deep down in the violet eyes came springing to the surface.

"There are two people coming down the corridor. They look like customers."

"Well, anyhow," he shot out, "I'll give you the squarest deal I can. I'll come and tell you whenever a match is on and who it's between. That's fair enough, isn't it? I'll tell you also——"

"Sometime later, Stephen. I'm going to sell $250 worth of dresses right now."

He saw her smile as a pair of Barque Haven's modishly-attired young matrons appeared in the door. Their husbands were in the stock market and their tastes were in proportion. She would undoubtedly sell them not $250 but $500 worth of her radiant creations. But he could smile, even in temporary defeat.

"All right," he said. "Go ahead and make your everlasting fortune. I'll be back in half an hour."

What was it she had said in clear, mocking tones as he passed her at the door? It had sounded suspiciously like "Don't." More and more clearly it was becoming borne in upon him that Mary Jane Devens Smith was a piquant, captivating young lady who flashed from one mood into another in the fraction of a second. She could be practical, crisp and incredibly feminine all at the same time. Those deep-fringed violet eyes had most certainly been laughing at him in their last glance. What unlucky chance had ever prompted him to ask her to come to the Barque Haven Arms?

But even if he hadn't met her in New York she would have come up on her own account. To protect

the interests of Mary Smith. He had her now as a daring and dangerous little adversary for the stake of Great-uncle Homer's hotel. He realized that beneath her gay appeal lay a strong foundation of business sense. She had an opportunity to fight for the possession of a glittering $250,000 caravansary and she meant to throw every gift of instinct and courage into the contest, regardless of whom she might have to oppose. After all it was as much her Barque Haven Arms as his. She was on the scene, manœuvering already. If he ever really fell in love with her and won the hotel, he'd lose it forever. Great-uncle Homer had said so. If he fell in love with her and failed to win ——

Mary Jane Devens Smith would laugh at him. See the hotel which was hers sold for the benefit of the Quarrendar Foundation? Hardly.

"She wouldn't even let me sit down with her at her table for luncheon," he muttered.

The veranda over which he was pacing presented a spectacle of animated activity from the wicker chairs of comfortable summer dowagers to the groups of youthful merry-makers, pouring out now for the beach in a flutter of sweaters and bright scarves. Somewhere there was a great deal of noise. That would be Etheldreda Satterfield, whom he would prefer to avoid. All around him was proceeding the life of a large hotel which goes on from morning until midnight. Stephen Quarrendar, feeling himself a very much outraged person, looked out to the adventurous reaches of ocean

on which he and Mary Jane Devens Smith at this moment ought rightfully to be sailing. It was a ruffled ocean, capped with bursts of white, and it suited his mood exactly.

He hardly realized that in the midst of his musing his feet had carried him around the corner into a circle of chairs where conversation sparkled brightly.

"Sit down," boomed hearty tones. "Take the weight off your shoes, Steve, and join the Sunday school. I'm in the middle of the story of my life and, believe me, it's a howl."

Instinctively Quarrendar turned his glance towards the sun, riding gallantly into high noon, where the glare was easier on the eyes. The veranda of the Barque Haven Arms was being enlivened by a light green Norfolk jacket, immensely belted; a violet silk shirt and white flannels unduly cheerful with a purple stripe. Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, was not one to whom the quieter things of life appealed. He was more at home in the hotel than its proprietor himself. Wherever he saw a group gathered together, he joined it and his voice was raised in friendly discourse. This time he was favoring the more elderly element with his presence.

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, the mother of Etheldreda and acknowledged grande dame of the Barque Haven Arms, looked as though she were bravely endeavoring to weather a cyclone. Her patrician countenance bore an expression of intense agony mingled with shock. About her wicker chairs held the members

of her intimate acquaintance, their eyes slightly widened and their hearing assaulted by the heartiest of tones.

"Yes, ma'am," the bounding Bill proceeded with complete amiability, "best time I had of all was when I was a kid selling papers on the streets of Seattle. Those were the palmy days. You bet your grandmother's wig! There isn't a newsboy to-day can yell a good murder right. You can't hear any of 'em more'n two blocks."

Quarrendar, deep in the cushions of a chair, found himself fascinated by the look on the face of Etheldreda's mother. It was evident she was certain that the pride of Walla Walla as a newsboy had been a grimy one; probably he had had only a single suspender. She appeared to be expecting a raucous shout of "Wuxtree! Wuxtree!" to burst at any moment over lawn and sea. The ravishing figure of Adrienne Chalmers undulated into the circle at this moment just in time to hear the last remark. She arranged herself so that plenty of silk stocking would show and gazed soulfully on this dominant male.

"Oh," she breathed, "how *terribly* romantic to be a self-made man! Paul, my husband, had *all* his money left to him. We were perfectly *impoverished,* he had such an *uncanny* ability for putting it on horses that ran feebly. The judge said that *couldn't* be called support."

She arched a smile at Quarrendar whereat he felt himself wincing noticeably. A man in the vicinity of

Adrienne was about as safe as a ten-year-old child in a cage of lions.

"Had so many I'd think you'd get 'em all balled up," remarked Weedon jovially. "Not that I blame you a bit though. Lucky fellows, I'd call the whole lot of 'em."

A glorious smile rewarded him. "It's the *simplest* thing," confided Adrienne. "Neville in New York, Parker in Pittsburg, Chalmers in Chicago. It's a key I can *always* remember my husbands by."

"And Mr. Barnes comes from Binghamton." The pride of Walla Walla gave a two-fisted hitch to his belt and beamed upon the multitude. "Well, I've made my pile, folks, and I don't mind saying it. It'll take a pretty good man to get it away from me. So now I'm sort of on the lookout myself for a nice little partner for life. I'll treat her right, you bet! Anybody here want to apply?"

His broad smile rayed about a circle of dowagers who were long since past the power of speech. A series of tiny clucking noises, resembling the sounds of frightened fowl, greeted the announcement of Bill Weedon's matrimonial hopes. From the lap of Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield there slipped a handful of roses from the bouquet which she purchased every morning on her stroll to the village.

"Pardon me, ma'am," said Weedon with the utmost courtesy and bent to retrieve the blooms. "You dropped a daisy."

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield stiffened almost

audibly. "Thank you," she informed him. "But I really do not think I shall need it."

Her horrified stare was met by an honest smile. "Well, then," said the pride of Walla Walla, adjusting the flower in a setting of green coat lapel, "I'll just freshen up the old benny. A bit of color helps to keep a man young. Thirty-one, white and unmarried—that's me. A couple of salmon canneries and a few timber forests. Fish and kindling. Anybody want to know anything more?"

"Ah—so interesting—some time again—very kind of you ——"

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was rising in an attempt to seem casual but giving every indication of flight from an unexpectedly encountered peril. The others of her group were fluttering, also; they would follow their leader with prompt and laudable fidelity.

"So sorry," murmured Etheldreda's mother a trifle raggedly, "but I've a guest for luncheon. I shall have to dress for it, I am afraid."

"I used to belong to a volunteer fire department," was the genial answer. "Shirt on your back, foot in a shoe and jump for the brass pole. That's my system." He bounced instantly from his chair. "If you're going in by that window, better let me open it for you, ma'am. Sometimes they stick and you have to kick 'em."

The company had vanished and Quarrendar and his exuberant guest had the scene to themselves. This was no ordinary young man who was footloose and happy in the Barque Haven Arms. He had slapped one dow-

ager's husband on the back and sent that small and terrified gentleman sprawling; he had been seen rolling dice with the younger college element back of the bathing beach cabins; he had gone down into the hotel basement and shown a harassed mechanic how to repair a broken water pipe. He had roamed and bounded in bland unconcern.

"Steve," he opened up promptly, "you're not one of these stiff-necked aristocrats same as a lot of people I've met in the East. You and me have been like brothers ever since I climbed out of the old bus down on the drive there. I bet you know right now the little peach I've got my bright blue eye on to take back with me to Walla Walla."

"Bill," said Quarrendar incredulously, "are you trying to tell me you've met your fate, or what?"

"That's it, old flivver. But I wish sometimes she'd wear more clothes. I haven't seen that girl dressed right since I met her."

Full-fledged and blazing, it seemed, the second romance of the Barque Haven Arms had sprung into being. Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, wanted to talk; he wanted to tell his best friend, Stephen Quarrendar, all about it. He wore the air of a delighted discoverer.

"The little bit who's named Etheldreda—that's her. Kind Christopher, but there's a baby who's alive and kicking! She's interested in yours truly too or I'll be a purple puppy. You should have had an ear in on the bawling-out she gave me yesterday. All I did was

ask her to move along on the wall and let a real he-man sit down beside her."

Quarrendar was running his hand over his head in a state bordering closely on trance. Etheldreda Satterfield, who had flared into instant antipathy at her very first contact with this large young man, was being picked as a companion through life by him. Odd recollections of Etheldreda's tones raised in scathing reply to remarks by Bill Weedon rose to increase a sense of sheer amazement. Etheldreda abhorred the pride of Walla Walla and she made no concealment of the fact; the sight of him, heartily plunging into every possible conversation, obviously drove her frantic. The leader of the younger generation cared neither for his face, his clothes, his manners or his method of speech. There wasn't anything about him for which she had the slightest use.

" She's a most extraordinary young lady, Bill." This was quite true, inasmuch as quiet never reigned for long in her vicinity. " But—well, she has a lot of pretty eager swains camping all about her. Not that I don't wish you luck of the best kind but it won't be such an easy affair, I'm afraid."

He received a glorious grin.

" Takes more than a little competition to give me the willies, Steve old flivver. The minute I swung an eye on her I said to myself: ' There's a swell-looking kid.' You could have knocked me over with a busted match-stick when I found out she was a girl. So I've been watching that little bit and the more I see of her

the better I like her. Wouldn't be very many dull days with her around the house."

Doubtless there would not. Any domicile containing both Etheldreda and the pride of Walla Walla would be magnificently uproarious from dawn until midnight.

"Likes me, she does," pursued Weedon blandly. "So does her old lady. Did you see the way I had her interested in my pedigree here on the porch before she left? I made a hit with her, all right, all right. She could hardly take her eyes off me. Ought to be darned glad to get a good, hard, red-blooded worker in the family."

"Bill, my faithful friend," said Quarrendar smiling. "All I can say is go to it and I hope you win. You have a real job ahead of you."

"Shake on it, Steve."

"You can count on me if you want to. To the bitter end. You see, it's a long story but the more romances there are this summer around the hotel the better I'll be pleased. I guess I'm more or less conducting a matrimonial bureau founded by a relative of mine. It seems a brighter and better scheme every minute."

"Anything I can do to help it along, old flivver? Count on Bill Weedon to think up a few bright ideas for you before he's through. While you're about it, hey"—an elbow shot into Quarrendar's ribs with friendly gusto—"you might have a look about for yourself. In that hat and dress shop, for instance, there's a bright little piece of ——"

"Thanks," Quarrendar interrupted hurriedly. A piquant, alluring face once more seemed to be smiling at him. "But I think I won't go off on any tour of personal investigation yet. You'll let me know, I hope, how things are going on with you from time to time."

"Sure will give you the low-down right along, Steve. Won't be anything to it once I get down to real action. I can see myself right now in a pair of carpet slippers with the wife sitting on the other side of the fire mending my socks. Kind Christopher! I haven't had a home since I was seven except a newsboys' lodging house and a lot of lumber camps and salmon canneries. I can just about feel my toes toasting on my own hearth."

With a magnificent gesture Bill Weedon slapped himself on the chest and swaggered off, his round head cocked to one side. Etheldreda Satterfield without a doubt was due to have her hands full when this hearty suitor brought himself into her circle. As for Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, that redoubtable dowager would be ringing madly for restoratives. Bill Weedon, once he knew what he wanted, would go right after it in his own highly individual manner.

The intense, spectacled face of a youngish guest intruded itself into Quarrendar's vision at this moment. Whoever it was, he appeared to be restraining an overflow of eagerness with difficulty.

"I'm leaving by the afternoon bus," he uttered ecstatically. "I just want to thank you, Mr. Quarrendar, for making me the happiest man in the world."

"Yes?" said Quarrendar kindly. He recollected the speaker now, a rising medico who was engaged in research work in some big hospital somewhere. "I'm delighted, Dr. Young, that you've enjoyed your stay with us. We'll still be doing business at the old stand if you feel like coming back next year."

This was the sort of sane and cheerful courtesy on which, he felt sure, the prosperity of a large summer hotel was founded. It was easy to achieve and cost nothing.

"We'll be back, Mr. Quarrendar, both of us, never fear. My future wife and myself will always remember we met on the tennis court at the Barque Haven Arms."

"Excuse me," said Quarrendar, startled for the second time in half an hour, "but I didn't hear your last remark very clearly. You say that you and your future wife ——"

"It's Miss Marston—Miss Grace Marston," rushed on the young man, whose eyes were shining. "We paired off as partners in a double match about ten days ago. The first thing I noticed about her was the way she hit them at the net. She says she liked my serve. Now we're engaged."

"Dr. Young," said Quarrendar blissfully, "my heartiest congratulations." The sun in an instant was shining brighter than ever.

"It'll be announced right away and we'll be married sometime early in the fall just as soon as I get my work cleared up down in Philadelphia. She's going

to leave here, too, in a few days. I'm making a special study of contagious disease. The germ theory is one of the most fascinating ——"

"Ah yes," said Quarrendar contentedly. "Chicken-pox, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough and lumbago. I've had them all or most of them anyhow. You said the ceremony will take place in the autumn?"

"That's it, and I'll never forget it was this place that brought us together." Quarrendar felt his hand being wrung by an earnest wooer who looked as though he were about to burst without warning into a chant of joy. "Isn't she wonderful? Isn't she the finest girl in the world? There she is waiting for me now. Good-bye, Mr. Quarrendar, you'll have to come and see us in Philadelphia sometime."

He saw them strolling down the stretch of lawn towards the waves, two young people joyously wrapped up in each other and soon to take the most important step in either of their lives simply because they had chanced to be introduced for a match of doubles at Barque Haven. He heard a girl's delighted laughter drifting back.

"That particular pair," he remarked, "really does look permanent. It seems to me that there's a lot—a whole lot—this morning to report to Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith."

[V]

JULY'S moon rode high in a night of fragrant warmth, sending across slumberous waters a drift of silver that roamed far out into the mystery of the horizon. The beach and the upflung cliffs that backed it were picked out in patches of light and shadow, making for the time being a realm of magic wherein anything might happen. At least so it seemed to Stephen Quarrendar, comfortably propped against the support of a boulder, with his mind attuned to the glamor of the particular evening of evenings. Here and there, scattered about on the sand or idly chattering in the ember-glow of the fire the other members of his beach party were split up into groups upon whom also the spell seemed to be working. Low, confidential laughter, little bursts

of talk and subdued rustlings told him how well the company were getting on.

He was glad now that he had thought of this moonlight picnic at Lighthouse Head, where sandy precipices led down to a slip of beach and above the flare of the beacon sent its message to passing ships at sea. The big light was revolving slowly in its tower, shining like some gigantic candle set in a window to guide the wanderer home. So it would burn until the first colors of the dawn reached up out of the waters to dim its glow.

Someone else was using the rock against which he was settled for a cushion, as is the fashion of beach parties, and the rock ought to have felt that it was more important than Gilbraltar. For hours now he had had as a companion none other than Mary Jane Devens Smith, whose slim person was leaning back against the coats and sweaters he had piled for her. There was between them no hint of feud or struggle. Instead, all was serenity. The Barque Haven Arms was forgotten, it seemed, for the time being.

She laughed and spoke as though to herself.

"How far away is Spain?"

"Three thousand miles, Jane. Right straight out in front of you where our old friend the moon is running his—or is it her?—headlight across the Atlantic. Who are you thinking of over there? Your friend Georgette isn't in the land of mantillas and mañana." Why was it that another figure, that of a pleasant stranger with a malacca stick and a tanned outdoor face appeared to

give an unexpected turn to his thoughts? "Nor, I gather, is the young man with whom I found you when I discovered the Jane and Georgette Shoppe in New York. As I recall he said he was bound for London, Berlin and points east."

"You can leave him out of it," she said swiftly. "He's pretty far away, don't you think?"

"Just about far enough," he grinned. "But what brings up a question of geography on a night like this? You ought to save it for the morning when I would madly wire to town for an atlas for you."

She laughed again, gaily, refreshingly.

"I was building a castle there, if you want to know."

"Then I'll help build it with you. As a builder of castles in Spain I can assure you that young Mr. Quarrendar is without a peer. Cornerstones laid, marble halls constructed, turrets set up in sections right from the factory. All woodwork plainly marked and plan provided with shipment. The whole can be erected in twenty-four hours with the aid of our book of instruction. Please mention number of castle as listed in our catalogue when ordering. I have a lot of castles. You can have your pick of them. All of them."

"This castle"—the girl spoke dreamily—"doesn't come in sections and it hasn't any number. It isn't made out of stones and wood and nails. It's made out of clouds and—oh—sunsets."

She was leaning forward with her fingers locked above her knees, her gaze on the moonlit waters. There had been that look in her eyes all the miles from

Barque Haven as Quarrendar's roadster had swept through the last flush of the dying day, on a road that led like a ribbon over rolling moors. She was thinking about something and what it was he couldn't make out.

"A castle in Spain," he repeated. "You'll be the princess there, I suppose. Have you picked out the prince yet?"

Did he dare reach over and unclasp those slim fingers? He wanted to badly. The ban of Great-uncle Homer appeared a trivial, frail thing on this night of moonlight. The girl had turned and he saw that her eyes were shining.

"No," she said firmly. "I'm not interested in princes. I'd forgotten for a minute that I'm just plain Mary Jane Devens Smith of the Jane and Georgette Shoppe, trying to get along." From behind them came the rattle of a tiny avalanche of stones streaming down the cliffs to find a resting-place on the beach. She lifted her shoulders in the ghost of a shrug. "I guess that's my castle falling downstairs. They usually do."

"I'll give you a new one," he burst out recklessly. "This one won't be built out of sunsets and clouds. It'll be built out of brand-new blue dawns and moonlight on the sea, just as it is out there. They're much better really."

Jane had risen and he was following her light steps to the beach. A pile of rocks jutted out here like a watch-tower, washed by the flow of the incoming tide on a shelf that had formed along the sea rim. Phosphorescent flashes down in the depths gave little lights

from time to time. It was a niche secure from intrusion, fashioned admirably for intimate thought and talk.

"So that's your kind of castle?" a brave voice challenged. "I thought yours would be the Barque Haven Arms."

His castle, he knew now, really was the Barque Haven Arms, away back there in the night, and he was doing all that he could to win it for himself. Somehow or other it had to intrude itself between them. The beach party had come in the light of an inspiration. You collected fifteen or twenty young people on a moonlight evening and brought them together in an informal atmosphere with the cliffs and beacon tower of Lighthouse Head providing the right romantic scenery. Even Etheldreda who had arrived amid wild shrieks and cheers, accompanied by her cohorts, had not been heard from for half an hour at least. Perhaps the spell of silvered tranquillity that lay over beach and sea was having its effect. The charming Adrienne Chalmers he had last seen established beside Mr. Barnes who was tugging unhappily at his moustache. He had made certain that these two, at least, should be present. As for Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, who had chopped half the wood and cooked all the bacon and eggs for the party, that hearty and unwearied young man had early proclaimed himself the life of the gathering.

"Coffee! Coffee! Best you ever tasted!" he was shouting from his station by the fire. "Last time I

cooked it was for sixty leather-necked lumber jacks. Here you are, folks! Bucket of mocha coming up!"

Quarrendar looked and knew content. His guests had broken up in the last few minutes from groups into couples sitting very close together, some of them unobtrusively seeking the shadows under the cliff. Later on there would be old songs around the last glow of the fire and then the long, contented ride home under the summer moon. Who could tell but that half-a-dozen engagements might spring from this one gathering where young eyes were soft and masculine charms abounded. Hearts were beating fast this summer in Barque Haven.

An odd, unusual pounding was beginning in his own. The sea, lapping at his feet became a soft, strange domain of romance across which two people could wander forever and ever, down the long trail of the moon. Where did it end? He felt now that he had to find out.

"Jane," he said, and again, "Jane."

"Yes?" Her voice was as low as his own.

"Out there—I think—two people ——"

She was moving a little, turning to face him. In another moment words—tumultuous, impulsive, spontaneous words—would be spoken.

They were, but he was not the utterer of them.

"Has anyone here a cigarette and a light?" inquired a voice from the waters at their feet. A charmingly-cropped head, followed by bare shoulders and after that by the entire figure of a young person in a one-

piece bathing-suit appeared out of the sea in the most casual, if startling, manner. Etheldreda Satterfield, that impossible maiden, seated herself on the ledge and began to disperse drops of ocean about.

"I suppose I'm disturbing a wicked twosome," she remarked calmly. "But that's all right. We've all got the whole summer ahead of us."

"And where did you come from?" Quarrendar still felt the shock of surprise coursing up and down his spine. "Do you mean to say that you——"

Gone was his moment of marvelous intimacy with the girl beside him, vanished into the limbo of the things that might have been. It was probably, he recalled with a start, just as well. The sea was once more merely a mass of water in which Etheldreda by now either had caught her death of cold or was going to.

"I don't always knock when I come in," said that young lady. "Don't worry either, I've had pneumonia. I just got highly weary of the party and thought I'd take a swim for a while. I brought my bathing suit with me in my vanity case and changed in that busted-down shack up the beach."

She reached over and with the most perfect assurance took Quarrendar's lighted cigarette from between his fingers.

"Thanks—that's a dear. Now if somebody only had a ukulele I'd sing."

"Etheldreda," said Quarrendar sternly. "You go back to the fire and get somebody to throw a coat

around you while you send for your clothes. You must be crazy to do a thing like this."

"Crazy as can be. I enjoy it." The impossible Etheldreda directed her next remark at Mary Jane Devens Smith, whose eyebrows were quizzical but who appeared to be regarding her with perfect friendliness. "He's about to lecture me at length and in detail. He's lost his sense of humor completely. What he needs is a wife to take care of him."

"Bill!" At the shout the burly figure of the pride of Walla Walla straightened up by the fire. "Bring over coffee as quick as you can. And some wraps. There's a girl here who's gotten wet."

A trill of carefree laughter greeted Quarrendar's command. He saw a light in Etheldreda's eye—a challenging, purposeful light—that he did not like in the least. Ardently he wished that she would fall off the rocks into the water from which she had come.

"As a male nurse you win the brown derby. You'll be taking my temperature next, I suppose. Did naughty Etheldreda spoil Stephen's evening for him?"

Direct, fearless and absolutely natural—that was Miss Etheldreda Satterfield. She was also fresh, combative and utterly without tact. Or was it—and he almost shuddered—that she was playing a game of her own and her amazing appearance had been premeditated?

"Here's the mocha," roared Weedon. "Kind Christopher, look who's here! Don't you ever wear any clothes, sister?"

"She's been playing mermaid," put in Quarrendar hurriedly. "She had a perfectly sound, perfectly reasonable idea that ten o'clock at night is just the right time for a swim. Of course it is, although personally I prefer four o'clock in the morning when there's less seaweed about. Put that automobile blanket around her and give her the coffee."

"Listen, you wild Westerner!" Etheldreda's voice was crisp and clear. "Are you trying to wrap me up like a department store package? Or do you think I'd look well as an Indian squaw?"

"I knew one once that was a beauty. She was a princess in Oklahoma," boomed Weedon. "Now just pour that mocha down your larynx and you'll feel like a forest fire."

"Why didn't you marry her?"

Etheldreda put down the coffee cup and drew herself to her full height.

"Marry who, sister?"

"The squaw in Oklahoma, Buffalo Bill. It'd be an ideal match."

With a careless gesture that dropped half the blanket from her shoulders she waved to the group and moved off. But she sent a final shot at them from a little way up the beach.

"Don't worry, Stephen, I'm climbing back into my clothes. Anything you say goes with me."

"Don't these women beat hell?" husked a loud whisper in Quarrendar's ear. "Here I've been particularly nice and entertaining to that little bit all

evening and this is what I get for it. Marry that Indian squaw! She had eight million dollars' worth of oil lands and offered me half if I'd do it! I left Oklahoma by the first train."

Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, was in a downcast mood. He brightened, however, as the three of them moved slowly towards the fire and drew Quarrendar aside with a tremendous air of secrecy.

"You said you wanted a lot of matches made around Barque Haven this summer, didn't you, Steve? Well, that's the way I feel about it myself. Get plenty of others going and I guess your own will sort of fall in with the procession. And, believe me, I've been doing my share to-night. You wait and see if we don't get some action almost any minute."

They received it in exactly forty seconds by the dainty watch on Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith's wrist. The comparative peace of the beach below the beacon was shattered by a strange and awesome sound, half-way between a gurgle and a strangled howl. Mr. Barnes was clutching at his throat, his eyes fairly popping from his head and his countenance graved deep in lines of agony.

"Water," he sputtered, "water, for the love of heaven!"

"Whole ocean's in front of you, brother," observed the pride of Walla Walla genially. "Only a few steps and you'll find more than you want."

"Not ocean! Drink water!"

Perhaps under the July moon the dismal Cyrus had

taken leave of his senses. He was tottering to and fro, making blindly towards the cliff and then stumbling back to the fire. Adrienne Chalmers was regarding him with the tender anxiety of one much interested in his welfare but wholly in ignorance of what it was all about.

"Cyrus, *dear* Cyrus, *do* sit down. You *mustn't* rush about so. It's not a *bit* dignified."

"Water!" reiterated the plaintive moan. "Wet water!"

From a picnic basket that lay half buried in the sand kicked up by the feet of Mr. Barnes, Quarrendar snatched a bottle and poured its contents into the nearest container.

"Here, try this and then kindly inform us what's happened. You're acting as though someone had tried to poison you."

The nose of Mr. Barnes was plunged into the calming draught. Three times he drank it down but he was still writhing when coherent speech returned to him.

"That's what they did. Tried to poison me. I hope they did. I wish they had."

Startled figures drawn from the kindly darkness of the rocks and from secluded, romantic nooks below the cliffs were hurrying towards the center of disturbance. Stalwart youths pushed forward, followed by the young ladies they had temporarily forgotten in the activity. Quarrendar's party were on tiptoe, revelling in the sudden burst of excitement, and pressing in an

eager ring about the participants. Sagacious, level-headed suggestions were volleyed out from all sides.

"Is there a doctor in the house?"

"Throw some more wood on the fire, quick!"

"Take his collar off!"

"O-oh, is he dying?"

Amid the babel of queries and upraised voices Bill Weedon stood like a pillar of granite. Quarrendar saw him move only once and that was to step for an instant to one side and overturn with his foot a pair of coffee cups that rested where Mr. Barnes and Adrienne had been sitting. He himself was engaged in endeavoring to restore some kind of order out of the general chaos, waving the crowd back and splitting it up into twos and threes.

"Nobody tried to poison you, Mr. Barnes," he informed him. "That was just a remark of mine. You must have swallowed your cigar the wrong way or something like that."

"Was drinking coffee," gurgled Mr. Barnes. "Then my whole throat—— Horrible! Can't describe it. It was something ghastly. Thought I was going to die."

"Well, you didn't and you're not going to if I know anything about it," said Stephen. "If there was anything wrong with what you've had at the picnic tonight the Barque Haven Arms, which is myself, will take the responsibility. Buck up, Mr. Barnes, you're not going to slip into the hereafter. We'll all dance at your wedding yet."

"Oh-oh," cooed an easily recognized voice. "How *perfectly* lovely!"

"Awful!" groaned Mr. Barnes and sat down abruptly in the sand while his shoulders shuddered. The incident was over, and slowly the crowd dispersed but still he remained there, apparently in black despair. He conveyed the impression of a man who has been rescued from the guillotine merely in order that he may be burned at the stake. From beside him Quarrendar caught a low rumble which was Bill Weedon.

"Somebody I know is going to get killed for this. So that's what I get for a friendly investment."

"Bill, have you gone crazy too?" demanded Quarrendar a trifle sharply. "A little too much has gone on around here to-night to suit me. There are times when I enjoy peace and quiet. Who is going to get killed for what?"

"That blasted gypsy back there in a tent by the road. Twenty dollars I paid him for this and he swore it'd turn the trick." A vial half full of colorless liquid appeared in his palm and Quarrendar took it up curiously.

"It's a love philtre," whispered Weedon confidentially. "I saw one sold once by a gypsy in the spruce woods on the West Coast that raised hell sure. Our lumber camp cook ran off with the foreman of the skid gang fifteen minutes afterwards and the guy she was due to marry chased 'em through three counties with a knife. So when I saw that gypsy on the way out I figured what worked once might work again. I

put it in our friend's coffee as a starter to try and help along the romances for you."

Yards out in the ocean sounded the faint plop of a love philtre sunk forever beneath the waters. The irrepressible and large-hearted pride of Walla Walla who quite evidently would do anything for a friend promised to prove a disruptive factor in the great struggle for Great-uncle Homer's hotel—too disruptive.

"Did you see any kind of a car around that gypsy's place?"

"Flivver in the field right next to it. A lot of tin on wheels."

"Then your philtre merchant sold you about four ounces of gasoline out of the tank for twenty dollars, Bill. I've just smelled it. Don't worry about him—he has undoubtedly folded his tent and flown. A nice crisp twenty is probably more money than he's seen in a month."

"Well," ruminated Weedon regretfully, "I kind of thought any chance might be worth taking. You bet your grandfather's wooden leg I'd give a million dollars if it had worked and we'd seen our bright little friend Mr. Barnes let out a whoop and run up the side of the cliff with his dizzy blonde in his arms."

So would anyone, Quarrendar had to admit, as from the level ground beside the lighthouse he watched his party climbing into their cars for the run home. The engine of the roadster hummed a song of its own as he swung out of the gateway. For an hour yet he would have Mary Jane Devens Smith all to himself while the

moon dreamed over the moors and the road rolled out behind them.

He could just make out in the scented dusk beside him a pert little hat and an adorable nose. Once more he felt gay and courageous speech surging within him. It was a moment for confidences while the motor purred rhythmically and the amber stream of the headlights played on the banks of heather alongside their path. Now and then a rabbit scampered out of the way, its cottony blob of tail vanishing in a wilderness of moor through which the roadster flew alone. Long since the other cars had been outdistanced.

It was too bad that Great-uncle Homer had never seen Mary Jane Devens Smith, or he wouldn't have written that clause into his will which made them adversaries for all time. But maybe if Great-uncle Homer had ever seen her he would have left her his total possessions. Stephen Quarrendar had not thought of that.

"I'm going to tell you a story, Jane." A night-wandering bird, out late perhaps and hastening home, swooped into the lights and disappeared. "Chapter One—There was an earnest, hard-working young man in New York City who came to the Cape to win a mighty hotel. Chapter Two—He met a girl." A glance showed him the piquant face very close to his shoulder and he rushed on madly. "Chapter Three—Lips like the curl of a morning glory's petals in the dew. Chapter Four—Eyes like deep forest pools in the dusk. Chapter Five—I am glad that I am the

owner of the Barque Haven Arms and that you are the Jane and Georgette Shoppe beneath its roof. Chapter Six——"

"Finis," said the girl firmly.

"Never." He paused in order to summon a more orderly train of thought. Now was the time for cool, collected reasoning that would set forth the situation as it really existed. The ebb and flow of conflict that tinged their days was unbearable. "Why should you and I keep on fighting each other, Jane? Look at what's happened already in not much more than a couple of weeks. What chance has Mr. Barnes of ever really escaping from the delightful Adrienne? I've told you that Bill Weedon has confided highly honorable intentions towards Etheldreda Satterfield. And that chap Dr. Young and Miss Grace Marston have left us all set to get married in the fall. Can't you see that it's just about all over? Let's have the summer together and forget everything else."

By her silence he was sure that he had made a convincing appeal of it. He was glad that he had brushed away her impossible hopes—strangely, impulsively glad. They could be real comrades now. There would be radiant hours of growing intimacy, sunset flinging its banners above far waters for their eyes and theirs alone, night and the wealth of soft-starred skies.

Mary Jane Devens Smith spoke mischievously.

"I'm sorry for Mr. Barnes."

"Then you admit that match?"

"Ye-es. So far."

"And Bill Weedon, as I said, has his eye on Etheldreda. How about considering that a romance?"

"No," said the girl cheerfully. "Not while Etheldreda has her eye on you."

"What?" Even as the exclamation came a familiar chill assailed him. Then he burst into a laugh, confident and bright. "You're seeing things. You know that you are."

"In a hat shop you not only see things, you hear them. Etheldreda's dangerous for you, Stephen. And I'm not worrying about the doctor and his fiancée. They won't be married this year."

"And why not?" No subdued acquiescence was meeting his statement of victory assured but instead a steady, courageous little fighting spirit that didn't know what it was to give in. Had he underestimated the spirit of Mary Jane Devens Smith, lured by the soft dreaminess of her mood? It was beginning to look so. "And what, might I ask, is going to stop them?"

Tantalizing mirth drifted into the night. "Really, I have no idea. You're trying to rush the whole hotel into matrimony, aren't you, just so you can win it? Without bothering about whether the matches are between the right sort of people or not?"

"They'll turn out well." Confidence once more filled him. "Summer romances always do. Even in the happiest of homes an occasional fork, I am informed, goes winging across the breakfast table. You think I can't win the Barque Haven Arms, do you? The Quarrendar system is unique. And, remember, I prom-

ised to tell you everything I'm doing on my own account."

"You must trust me, Stephen." Again he heard low laughter. "Everything you say I have a right to use against you."

"Down in that village tea-room the other day I found three Hawaiian musicians who are going to play at the Barque Haven Arms, twice a day," he announced. "Luncheon and dinner. Nothing but love songs. I'm thinking of writing to my bookseller in New York and having the shelves of the library decorated with the livest love stories published in years. I want to put hammocks on that kind of hurricane deck on the roof and the lights up there will always be turned low. Those are only a few of the brilliant ideas. The Quarrendar system aims to improve on nature and create an atmosphere directed to the proper end. It will be invincible. Do you give up now, Jane?"

"I think," said the girl clearly, "that you're about as conceited, egotistical and absurd as they make them."

Quarrendar gasped and for an instant his hands almost left the wheel. It was as well that they retained their grip for a sharp report broke the stillness brooding over the moors. The car lurched.

"Blow-out," he anathemized vigorously. "We'll have to postpone the argument while I throw a spare tire on the cripple. Be with you in a minute and then"—the Quarrendar smile flashed—"we'll have some more hard words."

He stood back presently with the air of a victor. The

new tire shone on a rear wheel and the whole job had been but a matter of minutes. He had proved to Mary Jane Devens Smith just how handy a man he was to have around in an emergency. Conceited, egotistical, absurd was he?

"All right?" she called over the back of the driving seat. "It's on good and tight?"

"No mechanic ever did a better job, Jane. What do you say?"

Only an alluring laugh answered him. She had slipped into place behind the wheel and he saw the roadster begin to move. Then it leaped forward and was a dozen yards away, running smoothly.

"Good-night, Stephen," floated back her voice. "It's not more than seven miles home."

Smaller and smaller grew the tail light until with a final wink it disappeared over the top of a rise. Stephen Quarrendar had been left flat in the middle of the road to find his own way as best he might back to the Barque Haven Arms.

"Now why," he apostrophized the unanswering night, "in the name of all that's high and handsome, did she do a thing like that?"

In the distance but coming nearer every moment rose the violent hooting of a siren, announcing to anyone who cared to hear that Etheldreda Satterfield and her companions, probably hanging onto the running boards, were approaching at that young lady's customary fifty miles an hour. Quarrendar drew on the coat which he had laid aside for his repair job and retired into

the shelter of the nearest clump of bushes. Somehow he didn't feel quite like explaining his situation to Etheldreda Satterfield.

It was not long thereafter that he was on the road again, the last car of his party safely past. The moon still soared high and the stars gleamed brightly but he had no eyes for the beauties of the evening. He was striding off the first of the seven miles to Barque Haven.

"It's the first time," he muttered, "that I ever walked home from an automobile ride."

A moment later he gave vent to an axiom which has been handed down from male to male throughout the ages. He vented it strongly, then more temperately and finally with a roar of laughter.

"Women—I'll say they're peculiar!"

[VI]

FIFTY-EIGHT closely-typewritten pages lay before Quarrendar on the table where he had just put them down. It was always cool up here under the eaves of the Barque Haven Arms in the third-floor room whose windows were almost level with the tops of the tall white pillars and the portico they upheld. As the future owner of a prosperous summer hotel he didn't see why he wasn't entitled to a good room with southern exposure and facing directly on the sweep of sea. He found it pleasant to sit at his ease and let himself relax after a stirring combat with the surf at the bathing beach. He had meant for days to mull through the verbiage of Great-uncle Homer's will, which the office of Mr. Ethan Hulbert had duly for-

warded to him, and twice already he had picked it up and let its pages flutter through his hands. Each time, however, he had put it down appalled by its mass of words. It took a lot of words to give away four million, eight hundred and forty thousand dollars all in odd ways.

"I can recite your delightful provisions as regards myself by heart anyhow," he stated to the formidable object. "Eeny meeny miny mo—three love matches or out I go. While I doubt if any reputable lawyer would phrase it in exactly that manner the sentiment conveyed is the correct one. And no winning the hotel by marrying a certain young lady. Let there be no doubt on that point."

Once more his hand strayed towards the testament of Great-uncle Homer and again it was diverted, this time to pluck a cigarette from a packet that it was hiding. Who wanted to plough through wills when azure ocean sparkled far out into the horizon beyond one's windows and the memory of violet eyes had arisen to perplex? Days had passed since the Lighthouse Head picnic when over the miles of moonlit moors he had trudged homeward, bereft with equal suddenness of both a maiden and a motor. The roadster had been safely housed in the Barque Haven Arms garage; he had to give Mary Jane Devens Smith credit for that. If it had been anything but a hotel motor, however, she might have run it into the sea and left it to the waves.

"Have you any explanation of your amazing con-

duct?" he had demanded the following day in the Jane and Georgette Shoppe. Then he had smiled forgivingly. No one could help smiling at Mary Jane Devens Smith all in white, her slim legs shining in silk as she sat on the edge of her office table with a most businesslike pencil behind one small ear. "Did you consider that a long walk would cool an overheated brain or that I would order a new pair of shoes through your shop if I wore out the ones I had on?"

"It seemed," she said, "a good idea at the time. That's as near as you'll ever come to finding out why a girl does anything. And I'm not a bit sorry for it, either."

So he had let it go at that. There was quite enough collision between their interests already. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith had plenty of spirit; too much so for anyone who happened to advise her just what and what not to do. She had distinct ideas on how to manage her own affairs without outside assistance. It made her vivid, amazing and highly provocative.

Slowly the smoke of his cigarette was drifting in streamers out of the window and as he watched its passage Quarrendar became aware that for several minutes past the sound of conversation had been wafting up from below. Someone was talking in one of the rooms close at hand and their tones were being carried directly to where he sat. He flipped the end of his cigarette at the window, missed it and had to lean out to rid himself of the débris. The first thing he saw on glancing down was a pair of attractive ankles about

fifteen feet below where someone was sitting with their feet on the window sill.

"I'll get him yet," he heard Etheldreda Satterfield announcing. It must be her room, separated from his by a mere ceiling, from which the voices proceeded. Etheldreda was obviously confiding in one of her friends. "I'm a good little getter and I never miss my man."

The tinkle of youthful, carefree mirth followed and then again the accents of the impossible child.

"Sit around and watch the performance. It'll be a work of art."

"I'm sure it will. And now I'll tell you——"

Whose voice was that—gay and with a tiny catch in it?

A very much startled young man drew in his head abruptly. This was, beyond a doubt, conspiracy to which he had been an innocent listener. Who was the man Etheldreda was out to get? This was not the charming insincerity of Adrienne Chalmers, seeking any male she might make hers, but the craft of the younger generation, concentrated on a definite object and never as yet defeated.

Challenging glances from Etheldreda's expressive eyes, little casual displays of interest in his doings, her unexpected appearance from the depths of the ocean when he wanted to be alone with dreaming loveliness. Stephen Quarrendar felt a cold sensation circulating up and down the region of his spine. He remembered what Mary Jane Devens Smith had said on that mem-

orable ride home, the remark he had so buoyantly laughed aside. Was Etheldreda Satterfield out after him?

He grasped the will of Great-uncle Homer from the table and sat down with it hurriedly. There is nothing so settling to the mind as poring over close upon sixty pages of legal phraseology.

But he never turned the first sheet. A resounding knock, which caused the door to leap on its hinges, preceded the ebullient entrance of Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, upon whose countenance shone the glow of true friendship. He was tugging a huge roll of bills from his pocket.

"There's a window in this joint that's been busted to Kingdom Come. I owe you the coin for it, Steve. Rich but honest—that's me."

"Explain yourself, my trusty companion," grinned Quarrendar. "If you've broken anything we'll put it on your account. That's how all the best hotels make their real money."

"That young chap who played fullback on some big college team wanted a little football practice. So we went out back of the house and began swapping a few boots to each other. The first I knew I'd kicked the thing bung through a window on the second floor."

"You what?" exclaimed Quarrendar. "You're telling me you were exchanging punts with our All-American kicker and sent yours twenty feet over his head?"

"Thirty if it was an inch. I learned my football on a vacant lot, brother. We used to kick over buildings

there. I kicked a big Swede pretty near that far once out on the coast but he'd tried to pull a gun on me."

His perpetual smile broadened.

"It was Mr. Barnes's window and he stuck his nose out and began to yell murder. So I told him I'd just seen his dizzy blonde and she was looking for him. I've never seen a guy pull his head in so quick. Match you for the damages, Steve, doubles or quits."

The coin fell and the pride of Walla Walla thrust his bankroll, uninjured, back into his pocket.

"Lucky all my life," he chortled. "I win out at everything. Going to be lucky in love too, old flivver. A week or so more and I'll be just about right to pop the great question to the future Mrs. William Weedon, of Walla Walla. I think Etheldreda's a corking fine name for a girl."

"It is," agreed Quarrendar hurriedly. "It certainly is. And don't forget, Bill, I'll do anything I can to help you. She's a charming young lady. But are you certain a week isn't a little early?"

"Not with this baby. Kind Christopher! I never had a big deal I didn't put through in a hurry. I can see in her eye she's growing real fond of me already. It's a good sign if they get up and walk away when you come rolling along. Means they want you to follow 'em. She did it to me this morning but I guess I must have missed her in the lobby. One o'clock, Steve. How about putting on the nosebag? This being in love makes a man hungry."

Side by side they descended to the foyer and passed

through it into the spacious dining room where Quarrendar, for the moment, took leave of his exuberant comrade. He was busy with his own thoughts as his eyes roved over the chattering throng of guests who by now were populating the tables all about him. Mary Jane Devens Smith hadn't come in yet; very likely her arms were filled with frocks which she was exhibiting in her sunshiny shop. The table, which was hers looked appealingly empty. It had two chairs but as yet he had never been able to sit down in the one that faced her. She might smile at him but they were rivals in earnest.

He had to admit that the guests at the Barque Haven Arms were an attractive crowd. Middle-aged business men on vacation and exhibiting the fact by soft collars and knickerbockers; proud-featured dowagers with budding daughters; collegians in sweaters under their sports coats, family groups and stray pairs and assorted individuals catalogued themselves on his mind as his gaze passed over the room. The neat forms of waitresses bustled to and fro, parading between the tables with trays or passing out through the service door not far away with their minds full of luncheon orders, most of which they would probably forget. Hauntingly over all breathed music—tantalizing, tropical music—from the strings of three brown-faced little minstrels who were happy in their corner. Not so loud as to disturb the guests, Quarrendar had counselled his trio from the village tea-shop, but just loud enough so that an undertone of yearning should run through the big, wide-windowed room. He had meant what he said that

night on the moors. He was giving the Barque Haven Arms a complete program of love songs twice a day. Besides, music soothed the savage breast when the waitress was slow in bringing dessert.

He moved a trifle uneasily. The melody, crooning and filled with longing, was making him restless. There was a lull of silence amid the chatter and wild, sad strains rose and fell like the surging of some distant sea. Presently the Quarrendar smile broke debonairly over his lips and he half made as though to rise in salute to the slim young lady who was coming directly towards him. Mary Jane Devens Smith had never looked quite so fresh and summery as at this moment when, with head high and eyes aglow, she was nodding a graceful progress to her table. Everyone in the hotel appeared to know her not only well but favorably. She, too, he felt, would make a distinctive owner of the Barque Haven Arms. That is if she ever won it.

Another light step sounded behind him, there was a flash of color and Stephen Quarrendar was no longer alone. With the charming insouciance of youth Etheldreda Satterfield had seated herself at his table.

"You needn't frown at me," she announced loudly. "It's a blessing to belong to the younger generation, especially in the summer. You can do what you darned please. So we're having luncheon together."

"Delighted," he managed to utter. A particular someone had passed him without a glance. And he writhed. "But I thought you generally had luncheon with your mother or your own crowd."

A clear, bright flame showed in Etheldreda's eyes.

"Why should I? The maternal parent is in very wrong with me right now. Educating an ancestor is a tough job, Stephen, for a poor unprotected girl child." She tossed an olive casually at the open window. When the Pilgrim Fathers landed in America they probably had met the forebears of Miss Etheldreda Satterfield waving tomahawks on the shore. She was a little Indian and a highly dangerous one. "So let's have a nice, quiet luncheon together and after that we're going for a run in my roadster. I know the cutest place away down the shore——"

"Here, here," urged Quarrendar rapidly, "have another olive. Try the soup. Try the swordfish. Fresh-caught swordfish is our specialty. Only last night it lay asleep in the deep. I can guarantee that——"

"The other girls," cut in Etheldreda calmly, "are by now blanching with envy. Do you know, Stephen, you'd be a real sheik if you ever let yourself go? There's a look in your right eye that speaks volumes. You've never had much experience with women, have you?"

In another moment the impossible Etheldreda might be publicly probing his soul or hurling the table cutlery at him. Here and there he could see interested faces turning in their direction as Etheldreda's carrying tones rose above the hum of the dining room. She was about to propose to him, it seemed, either an elopement, an abduction or a companionate marriage, all with the light-hearted nonchalance of modern youth.

"You're the best-looking person I've seen around here so far," resumed Etheldreda with appalling candor. She drew forth a vanity case and commenced the expert use of a lipstick by way of emphasis. "You must have them chasing after you all the time. Some night when I get you alone ——"

Could he, dared he signal to Bill Weedon who, he knew, would come bounding on the instant to join this wild tête-à-tête? He had had all he wanted of flaming youth. And then, as his harassed gaze took in a thin black cloud issuing forth from beneath the service door the voice of the pride of Walla Walla resounded in stentorian tones:

"Fire!"

The crisp smell of burning was wafted down the room. Startled faces were turned towards the door where the black cloud was now unmistakable as smoke.

"Thank God!" breathed Quarrendar and leaped to his feet. He had hoped for an earthquake to swallow Etheldreda Satterfield but a fire would be just as good. Half a dozen long strides and he had stopped in the center of the room exactly in front of Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith.

"Don't worry," he cast out swiftly. "Everything's all right. The place is fireproof." He raised his hand and shot a short sentence or so at his fluttering roomful. "If you want to leave you can all be out of here in thirty seconds. There isn't any danger and there won't be any. You might step out onto the veranda at that while I see what's up." Another gesture and he had

picked up the leader of the Hawaiian trio who were strumming away, their Eastern calm undisturbed.

" Something lively they can walk out to."

" Fire! " roared Bill Weedon gleefully. " Fire, folks, fire! " His face was one huge smile.

A crash came from the region behind the door where the smoke now swirled, in a dense mass, carrying a pungency that brought a rush of handkerchiefs from the pockets of those nearest to it. Quite unconsciously an agitated guest of distinguished appearance slipped into his pocket two silver spoons and a table-knife. A stately dowager took off all her rings and wound them away in her napkin. Half the guests of the Barque Haven Arms were on their feet. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was one of the first to leave. She bore herself with her customary composure and in one hand she clutched the vase of flowers that had been in the center of her table, in the other the straw hat a late-coming guest had inadvertently brought to luncheon with him and had deposited on a nearby chair.

" Fire! " bellowed leather-lunged accents. " Big fire, folks! Wuxtree, wuxtree! Women and children first! " The pride of Walla Walla appeared to have lost all sense of his surroundings under the strain. From a table far down the room a melancholy figure stalked, a Valkyr riding the wrack of disaster. In front of the orchestra Mr. Barnes paused and regarded it with a jaundiced eye.

" Whole hotel's going up. Play ' Nearer My God to Thee,' " he groaned and passed on into the outer air.

Etheldreda was being rescued by a pair of eager collegians who each had her by an arm but Mary Jane Devens Smith still sat at her table, an odd smile hovering about her lips, as she surveyed the march of the Barque Haven Arms' contingent towards safety. This Quarrendar saw as he bolted through the service door and plunged into a kitchen full of huddled figures and a cloud of smoke which the breeze from the open windows was driving into his face. No wonder there had been every indication of a holocaust in the dining room. Four huge roasts of beef, charred to cinders, reposed on the floor and someone was beating out the last sparks from a heap of paper wrappings next to the entrance. Enough smoke had been created to account for the destruction of at least a wing of the Barque Haven Arms.

But it was all over. The excitement was all over. Leon, the chef, a stumpy Gaul with superb moustaches whose normally white jacket at present was a ruin from débris stood beside the range, torn between rage and tears and bubbling strangely.

" Monsieur Quarrendaire! It is all ze fault of Leon! Nevaire, nevaire shall I recovaire from ze shame! I go and leap into ze ocean! "

Somewhat cheered by the thought of a magnificent suicide by way of atonement Leon brandished a fist under the nose of his assistant who also seemed on the verge of weeping.

" Zis—zis grand bête, Albert, he cannot pay attention to ze roast while Leon is away but one little moment." The huge fork which he still clutched in one

hand was aimed at his colleague's midriff and the pale-faced Albert was obviously expecting to be spitted at any instant. "Ze noble beef she go up in ze flames—pouf, pouf, pouf—and Leon is a ruined man! Sacre mille des cordons bleus!"—a youth of some sixteen or seventeen years, a diminutive edition of Leon, permitted his eyes to bulge from their sockets in terror—"my worthless nephew, Hyacinthe, whom I make ze bus boy—non, non, non!—he cannot be bozzaired by watching anysing zat is undaire his nose! Nevaire, nevaire shall Leon be able to look ze world in ze eye again!"

"What's all the shooting about, cookie?" It was Bill Weedon, large and genial, who had calmly penetrated to the scene of calamity and was now planted in its midst. "Your guests are all out in the fresh air, Steve. No lives lost and only one call for the smelling salts. We won't have to ask the Red Cross to rush a special train from Boston."

"Just a minute, Bill," broke in Quarrendar. "I'm trying to get at what's happened in our glittering kitchen. Leon, you're getting a whole lot excited over a little thing like an accident to the roast. Now just tell me all about it without stabbing anyone with that meat fork."

Leon flung his fork like a javelin onto the range and lapsed into comparative calm. "It was ze love songs so tendaire of ze orchestraire in ze dining room zat start ze conflagration. I hear zem floating through ze door, Monsieur Quarrendaire, while I am fixing ze roast—oh so brown and big——! Ze love songs zey

awake ze memory of ze past for Leon. Ten, twelve, fifteen times I have been in love most profound, on ze word of honnaire, but zere is one I love most of all. Ze songs zey make me sink of her and I go to ze door to listen bettaire. Bang, pouf! Ze rascal Albert and ze worthless Hyacinthe zey listen too—ze roast is ze pillaire of fire! Ze big smoke roll out ze door! I am betrayed! I die of ze indignity!"

Quarrendar smiled upon a gallant Gaul, swamped in the depths of depression. For five years now Leon had been the chef of the Barque Haven Arms and his equal was not to be found on the Cape.

"It isn't such a catastrophe, after all, Leon. Things like this are bound to occur sometime in any big kitchen. So we'll forget the whole business and all go back to work. I know I can count on you to turn us out a poem in the culinary art that'll make our lost course look pretty feeble. Back to the range, Leon. The Old Guard dies but it never surrenders!"

"Monsieur Quarrendaire! Nevaire shall I forget zose words!" From the abyss of despair Leon had leaped to the heights of hope at a single bound. "I shall prepare ze masterpiece for zis evening zat shall make ze name of ze hotel famous forevaire!" The stumpy figure fairly bounded before their eyes. "Ze petits poissons a la Quarrendaire! Zat shall be ze epic of Leon! I lay down my life for such an employaire! I make ze rascal Albert and ze worthless Hyacinthe lay down zeir lives also!"

From the expression on the faces of his helpers the

power of Leon, the chef, was feudal and complete in his kitchen. Quarrendar checked the demonstration with a nonchalant gesture and turned to express a few thoughts to Bill Weedon, whose beaming countenance expressed a vast self-satisfaction. After all the Hawaiian minstrelsy had been a success.

"Bill," he inquired crisply, "now that perfect peace has descended on our roof-tree would you mind telling me what your idea was in howling 'Fire!' at the top of your lungs and trying to precipitate a panic in the dining room? You were about as nervous yourself as a marble monument but you certainly did your best to get everybody else stirred up. Did you want to see a few people trampled in the rush?"

"With five pairs of those French windows letting out onto the terrace and three big doors?" beamed Weedon. "Three hundred folks could have walked out without even bumping elbows. I knew what I was doing, Steve old flivver." An expansive wink was followed by a confidential lowering of his voice. "What happens when there's a fire? Everybody rushes to save what's most valuable to 'em, don't they? I was just smoking out a few romances for you. Nothing but a bit of quick thinking, you bet your grandmother's wig! I saw five of your guests dashing right over to other tables to see if their girls needed a fireman to carry 'em down a ladder. I'm not worrying about the two that went for Etheldreda."

Mary Jane Devens Smith sitting calmly in her place while smoke rolled out of the door, Mary Jane Devens

Smith, his sworn adversary, with her smooth head bravely erect. With an involuntary start Quarrendar recollected that his own first move had been to leap to her side and tell her that all was well. But then, of course, she just happened to be near him. That must have been it.

"Sure I knew there wasn't any danger," Weedon was proceeding. "If you want a real kitchen fire you ought to see a hogshead of beans go up some day. You've done me some pretty good turns around this joint, Steve. It's time I did something for you. Kind Christopher! Why shouldn't I make 'em think we were having a real fire? Gave you a chance to be a hero. You owe me a vote of thanks."

There was not very much that could be said in answer to arguments of such originality and speciousness. If five more budding love affairs had been brought to light by the excitement then Bill Weedon ought to have a medal for his services. Gravely Stephen shook the big, freckled hand.

"You can do me another favor, Bill. Just wander out onto the veranda and shepherd the flock back into the dining room, will you? Tell them the flurry's over and we're back to normal. I want to look around here a few minutes more and then I'll be out myself. Say anything you want to the multitude."

"That's my dish," gloated the pride of Walla Walla. "I brought two hundred striking lumberjacks back to work once with a few well-chosen words. I'll have 'em trying to buy stock in the hotel before I'm through."

A few moments later he heard the booming of a distant oration. Bill Weedon, probably, had mounted the terrace balustrade and was holding his audience spellbound. There was no telling where his friendly if somewhat erratic efforts to aid his trusty friend Quarrendar would end. The pride of Walla Walla, it had been borne in on him some time ago, was a direct and dynamic young man who stopped at nothing. He did not thrust obstacles aside; he blithely trampled them into the dust. The wild, free West had invaded the placid tranquillity of Barque Haven and strange events were bound to occur. Thus he mused, making his way back to his own table through a room, filled once more, where little applauding murmurs greeted him as he passed.

" Isn't Stephen a *wonderful* hero! " he heard the fascinating Adrienne Chalmers remark. " You remember what Mr. Weedon just told us. Stephen put out the fire *single-handed* when it was actually blazing to the ceiling. He saved four people's lives in the kitchen. No, it was *seven.*"

He shuddered. The damage had been done. An ordinary kitchen fire which had been extinguished practically as soon as it had started had been elevated to the thrilling dignity of a holocaust. He would never be able to persuade anybody that he hadn't saved the whole hotel. Bill Weedon knew his human nature far too well for comfort.

All right, let them think he was a hero. A hero was a person who dared anything and there, just a few feet

away, was Mary Jane Devens Smith—adorable, inexplicable—sitting at the table to which he had never as yet been invited. He realized that he was at her side and that she was smiling up at him, a smile he could not fathom.

"I think I'll join you."

"Do," she said. "I know you'll enjoy this."

He stared at the newspaper clipping which bore the attractive headline "Philadelphia Doctor Gets Big Post." A joyous grin hovered about his lips.

"So there is Number One in cold print, Jane."

"Read on, Stephen. Read it all."

". . . 'has just been appointed a member of the medical mission of the Eastern Institute of New York City which leaves next week for an eighteen months' study of contagious diseases in the Orient. The wedding of Dr. Young to Miss Grace Marston which was set for this autumn will be postponed until his return.' Jane!"

"Just think! He'll be at the top of his profession when he gets back! Isn't that worth putting off a wedding for?"

"But how in the world did this happen?" Match Number One had disappeared into thin air as far as his prospects were concerned.

Mary Jane Devens Smith surveyed him calmly.

"A sheet of notepaper and a stamp. I can't help it if my cousin is one of the directors of the Eastern Institute, can I?"

"So you did it?"

"You're very quick at getting down to facts to-day, Stephen. I did it with a letter which started 'Will you please' and ended 'Yours affectionately.' It seems the Institute knew of his work already."

"I still have two matches left and probably half-a-dozen on the way," he challenged swiftly. "You needn't think you can break up all the romances at Barque Haven to win the hotel away from me. There's Mr. Barnes and Adrienne. There's Bill Weedon and Etheldreda. There's ——"

He was far from the end of his vigorous announcement when the waitress laid a missive at his elbow and departed with flapping skirts. It carried only a few words in a sprawling hand but they fairly blazed at him.

"I'll get you yet."—E.

Etheldreda Satterfield, that impossible but attractive young lady, had come out into the open. There was no doubt now but that it was Stephen Quarrendar she was after.

"I can guess who that's from," said Mary Jane Devens Smith. "You can forget about pairing her off with anyone else, Stephen. You see I was talking to her in her room just before luncheon."

So it had been her voice, as he had known all along, that he had heard from his window aiding and abetting Etheldreda in her outrageous declaration.

"And, of course, I wished her luck."

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[VII]

FOR a solid week of seven days of twenty-four hours each it had been raining in Barque Haven, not in fits and starts that gave dun clouds an opportunity to part and let the sun shine through, but with a steady, ceaseless downpour. The world had turned gray. The sea, washing against the stonework which defended the lawn of the Barque Haven Arms from its encroachments, lay before the eyes as a melancholy and totally useless waste of water. The pines in the nearby grove wept like cypresses above a grave. Everybody in the white and rambling hotel had begun to hate everybody else about the fifth day as is the way of human nature when an eternity of rain has set in.

But this morning the sun was visiting its radiance

again on a new-washed, sparkling sea and on the sweep of beach and moor. Life—glorious and refreshing—tingled through Barque Haven, filled the foyer and overflowed onto the veranda. Quarrendar allowed himself a profound sigh of satisfaction. If the rain had kept up for another twenty-four hours there wouldn't have been a romance left in the place. It is difficult to think of love when gusts of water are blowing onto one's neck through the windows and all faces retain an expression of resigned boredom. Mr. Barnes towards the end had withdrawn into the hermit-like seclusion of his room and had not been seen in some days except when driven forth by hunger for his meals. It was rumored that he was growing a beard. Etheldreda Satterfield, to the infinite relief of a certain young proprietor, had also been held incommunicado due to the world's finest cold, which she had obtained by daring anyone to come for a walk when nothing under a gondola could have approached the portico. She had been eliminated, for the time being, as a possible menace.

"We can thank our lucky stars that's over," Mr. Arnold, the manager was genially informing Quarrendar in the little sanctum behind the reception desk. "Every place on the Cape gets such weather some time during the summer. It's one of the adjustments of nature. But all the same it's a job keeping the guests amused while it lasts. Do you suppose Mrs. Satterfield will ever speak to Mr. Weedon again?"

Quarrendar doubted it. The two-day bridge tournament which he had promoted in a desperate endeavor

to brighten up the place had not been the success he had hoped for. He had found the pride of Walla Walla beside the elevator into which the palpitant wreck that was Etheldreda's mother had just disappeared, probably on her way to bed and recovery from shock.

"It seems she just about had both hands on your tin mug." On a table in the foyer gleamed the silver bowl that was to go to the greatest scorer of points. "Then she draws me for a partner. Anything to make a hit with the old lady, Steve. I thought this bridge was a kind of cross between pinochle and draw poker but it seems it ain't. Kind Christopher! I put 'em up to the limit on nothing and it cost me and the old lady five thousand points. I like a game where a good bluff goes."

No, Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, who took her bridge seriously, still shuddered at the sight of the bounding Bill Weedon. As likely as not she would request that he be ejected from the hotel. Adrienne Chalmers had been a bright spot, however.

"It's the *sweetest* silver," she cried as with a neat speech Quarrendar presented the trophy to her as the winner. "I *always* used to get the most *delightful* silver at my weddings. I feel almost homesick."

Beyond the windows of the managerial sanctum the sun danced now on clear sapphire water and once more Quarrendar gave thanks. For Mary Jane Devens Smith also had been inaccessible for days, waving him firmly out of the Jane and Georgette Shoppe where, it ap-

peared, she was involved to her dainty chin in business. She was altering with her own hands a number of hats whose effect didn't quite suit her. Or something like that. She seemed to be revelling in her recent triumph over him.

The voice of Mr. Arnold broke in upon his musings. "Harmony seems to be restored at last. One morning of sunshine such as to-day's and we don't have to worry about our guests packing up their bags and leaving. You know, of course, this is the most successful season we've had since your Great-uncle Quarrendar took over the hotel?"

It needed only a glance at the populous foyer, the crowded halls and the throngs basking on the sun-swept veranda to inform anyone of that. Whoever came into possession of the Barque Haven Arms would own probably the most flourishing caravansary on the Cape.

"And, I imagine you've seen this about our late guests?" A folded newspaper was pushed forward. "Who would have thought old Mr. Bedloe would be rushing into matrimony at his age?"

"What's that?" The query was fairly hurled at Mr. Arnold. Hope, which had been at a low ebb throughout the week, due to the strategy of Mary Jane Devens Smith, began to glow once more. Vaguely he recalled the invalid Mr. Bedloe who had sat for a fortnight in a remote corner of the veranda, clutching a cane and having spoonfuls of strengthening beverages served to him at regular intervals. "Someone is getting married, you say? Out of this hotel?"

The caption, "Aged Shoe Manufacturer to Wed Trained Nurse" leaped at him from its column. Mr. James F. Bedloe, 70, well-known local prince of industry of Lynn, Mass., had confirmed the rumor that he was to wed Miss Edith Gray, 25, trained nurse, who had recently returned with him from the Barque Haven Arms.

"It all happened here," smiled Mr. Arnold. "Mr. Bedloe's been a guest for years and always brought a nurse with him. This new one came a day or so after he arrived. Sort of quick work—eh, Mr. Quarrendar? There must be something about this place that gets people. We've had any number of matches I know of start right in the hotel."

Number One—already another Match Number One had been definitely accounted for. July was still in full swing and the clouds had been swept away at last from the life-giving sun and the blissful summer moon. Mr. Barnes and Adrienne . . . Bill Weedon and Etheldreda . . . at least four other promising affairs the rain had failed to dampen. . . . Great-uncle Homer . . . the Barque Haven Arms—young Mr. Quarrendar found that he was tapping happily on the desk with Mr. Arnold's silver pencil. Mary Smith . . . Mary Smith . . . Denver . . . Mary Jane Devens Smith didn't have a chance in the world of entering upon the legacy of Great-uncle Homer she was so daringly competing for against him. The old refrain came back strong, stirring his mood to victory over this completely disquieting young lady.

He would burst in upon her with the news and show her—in as nice a way as possible—that the second round was his. The luck was with him at last.

"I'll just borrow this item," he said nonchalantly, running a knife-blade around the heartening if somewhat smudgy paragraphs. "There's a person not so far from this room who'll be interested in learning of it. She showed me one the other day that spoiled a week's sleep." He got up and strolled through the foyer and down the corridor, quite pleased with himself.

She wasn't in. The Jane and Georgette Shoppe presented a barren, frock and hat-filled emptiness. She was probably down in the village hopefully investigating the local shops in regard to needles and ribbons. If she was there he would find her.

In a rippling sheet of blue bordered by a fringe of lush sea grass the tiny harbor of Barque Haven ran back from the sea to meet tree-shaded streets and the piers of wharves that welcomed a fishing fleet of scarcely more than a dozen boats. Gray and weather-beaten, a scattering of huts, in which the adventurers of the deep once mended their nets and stored their gear, crowded close to the water at the end of the sands where the houses of the village faded into the expanse of the moors. From a long way off Quarrendar saw the flash of color against the quiet background and as he came nearer he could see her bending over something.

"So," he smiled at her, "you're still busy? Behold,

distraction has arrived. The owner of the Barque Haven Arms has sought out and found his guest."

"The owner?" she inquired lightly. "Not yet."

"The rest of the statement can stand anyhow, Jane. I certainly have found you."

"It seems," she smiled back at him, "that you're always trying to do that, aren't you?"

"If you want to escape you shouldn't wear a scarlet sweater which can be seen for a distance of many miles. Also you shouldn't make yourself so well known in the shops that anyone there can tell the inquirer where they last saw you headed for."

"I came out here to get a little peace and to write a letter." She exhibited a pad on which one page had almost been completed. "Now are you going to go away and let me finish?"

"Not until I know who it is to." The Quarrendar smile was debonair. "I can't have you using the Barque Haven Arms stationery to further your nefarious schemes of undermining the romances which are springing up all about us. It isn't ethical."

"I bought this pad in the village half an hour ago. It cost me all of twenty-five cents. So you needn't worry about my using your writing paper to beat you. And besides this letter is for somebody abroad."

"Georgette? Or"—for no reason at all there rose once more a random recollection of a likable young man with a polo player's build and a deep tan departing from the Jane and Georgette Shoppe on a June afternoon in New York—"to the handsome stranger I

met in your place that day? Who was he incidentally? It occurs to me I've hardly thought of him since."

"Maybe," she said demurely, "he was my brother. But this letter's for Georgette in Paris. You'd be amazed what is in it."

The polo player or whoever he was vanished from mind as befitted a total stranger whom business had taken to the other side of the Atlantic. Out of sight, out of mind was an excellent axiom. It was fitting, however, that Georgette should be remembered.

"I hope that you are thoroughly describing a conceited, egotistical—the adjectives are yours, if you remember—young man who is your hated opponent in the combat for a large summer hotel." His tone was bright and gay. "Let me down easy, will you, Jane?"

"Don't worry." The pad was closed by a slim hand. "You're getting all you deserve in my letters. Georgette is very much interested in hearing how I'm coming on."

She was looking out at the horizon where the feathery trail of a ship's smoke was drifting down the sea.

"I love Barque Haven," she said dreamily, more to herself than to him. "I think I'd like to stay here always. Those queer friendly houses with trees all around them, the sleepy old streets, the people who live in them. I wish it were all mine. I love it."

So the charm of generations—old Barque Haven which once had seen the blunt bows of long-vanished whaling ships thrust through the waters of its harbor

on the way to the other side of the world—had fallen on her as well. Quarrendar himself had felt it every time he had gone wandering through its tranquil lanes or saw good gray shingles caressed by the leaves of bending elms.

"And the Barque Haven Arms," she had flashed from wistfulness to defiance. "I wish it were mine too. It will be."

"One more romance was declared to-day. One more pair are marching bravely into the uncharted domain of matrimony." A sentence or so was sufficient to describe the latest affair. "In another three weeks or so, Jane, I'm afraid it'll all be over."

Once more he surveyed her cheerfully, an adorable figure seated on the planking that did duty for porch to the friendly old fishing shack. It was a new world to-day—a glowing, bright world revivified by golden sunshine and made for adventure. A little thrill ran through him.

The girl gave a tiny pat to her hat, thereby adjusting it to a still more captivating position. At that first meeting of theirs—years ago it seemed—in New York he had visioned her as friend, ally and confidante, standing staunchly beside him in the struggle, encouraging him in adversity, sending him into battle with hope renewed, her keen little mind aiding and abetting his. Entrancing violet eyes swept him from beneath shadowing lashes.

"There's one satisfaction," she said distinctly. "You'll never win the hotel by marrying me."

"Jane!"

"Stephen!"

This girl had provoked him utterly ever since her arrival, stirred him, made him walk home from his own car, raised him alternately to the heights and dropped him with a thud. She had announced her intention of helping Etheldreda Satterfield to enmesh him in her wiles. Now she was mocking him again, luring him on—to what? Here was challenge. Not for nothing had he felt his blood race in his football days when he went plunging into a massed line and fought with every ounce of strength to cleave his way through. That had been the joy of sport.

This was the surge of something else—ecstatic, resistless. Violet eyes, brave chin, rebellious lips. Was he really falling in love with Mary Jane Devens Smith?

Blue sea and blue sky were merging in one whirling globe. He didn't care what the consequences might be. He moved a step towards her but that one step was all he did take. With a thunderous crash a long, sinister object came hurtling through the side of the shack directly behind them carrying a pair of planks with it and burying itself in the opposite wall. Dust and splinters rose in a cloud. Catastrophe had struck out of the heavens of noon and what it was all about he didn't know. The girl's eyes were wide and one hand had, for an instant, flown to her lips. It was no wonder she was startled. It is not usual for a twelve-foot, iron-shod harpoon to wing its way shatteringly into the conversation of a pair of young people.

From nearby where a sandy road ran close to the line of huts a voice was loud in jubilation.

"Kind Christopher! If it didn't knock the whole place for a goal! Somebody bring it back and I'll have a shot at what's left. I want to pay for some real damage!"

"Bill!" Quarrendar was around the corner and facing a merry group from the Barque Haven Arms in less than three seconds. The Pride of Walla Walla was just rolling up his sleeves over muscles that bulged like iron knots. "Don't you ever think of letting out a yell in advance before you wreck a house? It might interest you to know that two of us were on the porch when you let fly. You oughtn't to be allowed around loose."

The round face fell in honest contrition. "Sure I oughtn't, Steve old flivver. But how could I guess anybody'd be hanging around one of these dumps? They ain't been used in years. We've been down the road so the girls here could buy some antiques and I picked me up a whale harpoon for forty dollars. I just wanted to show the crowd how we used to spear salmon out on the West Coast." He ducked his bullet head cheerfully towards Mary Jane Devens Smith. "Sorry, lady. Next time I'll pick out the Barque Haven bank or something solid like that to practice on. Wait till I get my toothpick out of the junk pile and we'll all roll back to the hotel."

"How was it," said the girl clearly, "that you used to spear salmon?"

She took her place beside the pride of Walla Walla, now striding along with his lethal weapon triumphantly on his shoulder. Bill Weedon was expansive on the matter of West Coast salmon sport; his genial tones boomed and roared. In the rear of the procession trailed Stephen Quarrendar in an unwontedly thoughtful mood. It would be wiser to postpone all analysis of a chaotic mind until a calmer moment arrived. They were all going to be late for luncheon anyhow.

[VIII]

"ISN'T the ocean the *loveliest* blue to-day? It reminds me *so much* of Walter's eyes. Walter was my second."

"Look out for Bill! He dove through three people yesterday!"

"Who's the little wonder in the green bathing cap?"

"Now the sure cure for sunburn is ——"

"I'd like to lie out here on the sand forever."

"Hey, who swiped my towel out of the cabin?"

The Barque Haven beach from end to end was a rioting mass of color and gayety. For an hour past everybody had been headed in the direction of its sunny, sandy domain, streaming in from the golf links and tennis courts, striding back from a brisk walk on

the moors, languidly ambling down from the cushioned wicker chairs of the veranda. From eleven o'clock until one each morning it buzzed and hummed and shouted and splashed in carefree abandon, exhibiting to the gaze of the spectator a multitude of individual and highly abbreviated fashions. It was the pulsing center of Barque Haven, clamorous with life. And all these people from slender visions in one-piece bathing creations to elderly and sedate visitors who took their dip in the manner of a solemn rite were his guests. They were Quarrendar's guests. He felt towards them much more like the host of some big country place than the proprietor of a caravansary of over one hundred and fifty rooms, with bath. The rambling white bulk of the Barque Haven Arms was more like home than any place he had known in years. He stretched his muscles luxuriously and sat up on the sand. In a white jersey and short bathing trunks his athletic build displayed itself most satisfactorily.

Everywhere his contented glance took in groups of young people disporting themselves to their heart's content. Off the end of the springboard of the diving raft slim shapes were shooting in flashes of action, vivid head-scarves and jerseys and smooth white limbs hurtled into the water one after the other amid a chorus of shouts and laughter. Barque Haven girls could swim, they could dive with anyone. He saw the figure of Etheldreda Satterfield poised on the bending plank. A joyous whoop emerged from her and she took the water in a perfect plunge. Not without many a dis-

play of daring and unconventionality does one attain to the position of leader of the younger generation in a large summer hotel. To left and right stretched the line of marquees—picturesquely-striped and equipped with canvas chairs—where cool shade beckoned after the beach and sea sports. A lifeguard weatherered to the color of mahogany, whose piratical moustache proclaimed his ordinary calling to be that of a fisherman, sat stolidly propped against a post. In Barque Haven, it was rumored, when a native got himself a good job it took an earthquake to remove him from it. Once every quarter of an hour the brawny native son moved his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other. He hadn't had to try to save anyone since the beach had been opened seven years ago. His eye, nevertheless, had a highly capable look.

"Going in again, Jane? Or have you ridden the sea horses as far as they'll go this morning?"

She was fascinating, she was enchanting, she was a raving little beauty in a bathing suit. He caught the soft curves of her, the strong small arms, the slender feet. Bright hours of sunshine and laughter with her beside him was what Quarrendar wanted, right now, most of all. The future could take care of itself.

But some day there would have to be a reckoning.

"I'm all through, Stephen. Go ahead if you want some more splashing and swimming. I came to Barque Haven to improve a tan in the sun."

"The dread secret is revealed. I know at last why you really are here. I thought it might be because an

engaging and handsome young man invited you to set up a shop in his hotel."

"Go get into the sea," she said. "That's the answer to that."

"I am ashamed of you, Jane," he grinned. "I consider that you are behaving with impossible candor. What you really want me to do is to tie a boulder about my neck and jump off the end of the diving float. Then a summer hotel would be yours."

"It would only come loose," she remarked. "The boulder, not the hotel."

The violet eyes were brimming with friendly mirth. The soft lips were ——

Stephen Quarrendar started rapidly for the sea.

He crawled out presently onto the planking of the raft, feeling the breeze grateful on his dripping limbs, and sat there dangling his feet in the water. Fifty yards away lay the beach, dotted hilariously with groups that reclined on the sand or wandered up and down visiting each other. All was merriment and activity—the playtime of Barque Haven. He couldn't help searching for the bright tints of Mary Jane Devens Smith's head-scarf. Adrienne Chalmers had joined her—Adrienne in a gorgeously scanty costume with a beach cloak and an expensive-looking beach parasol, snakeskin sand slippers and a bracelet about her ankle. Her beautiful nose was powdered and she had no intention of ever going near the water, much less into it. Mr. Barnes was nowhere in sight. At his last appearance his knobby shoulders and wild tangle of hair and

moustache had made him look like a strange bit of seaweed. Quarrendar chuckled and splashed his feet around some more.

He felt a playful pat on his shoulder. He had forgotten that Etheldreda Satterfield was on the float and that she had designs on him.

"Stephen," said the impossible young lady distinctly, "let's you and I swim out about a quarter of a mile into the ocean."

"Sorry," he smiled, while a tiny shiver of cold—or was it apprehension?—agitated him. "I came out here for just one dive and then I'm rushing it back to the hotel. Mr. Arnold's not feeling quite up to himself to-day and I'm doing some of his work."

This was true but it made no impression on Etheldreda. Her brow became mutinous.

"There's something I want to say to you in private. I can't say it here in front of a Sunday-school convention. We'll swim out half a mile."

"And who brings us back? Did you ever pause to think of that, Etheldreda?"

"I said I'd get you yet," she declared. "I will. Come on and I'll show you how to be the sheik of the Atlantic. You're entirely too good-looking when your hair is dry. You must be a regular devil among the women."

One hand was ruffling through his hair in the most comradely fashion. In another moment it would probably be around his neck and Etheldreda would be proclaiming him to the entire beach as her captive. He

wanted to be rid of this dynamic child as instantaneously as possible. She was more dangerous than Adrienne because everyone forgave her on account of her youth.

"Go up on that springboard," he said firmly, "and take a good long dive. That's my advice. It will make you damp but calm."

He had used almost the words that Jane a few minutes ago had flashed at him. Had she been trying to rid herself of him as he was attempting to do with Etheldreda? That young lady had risen, decided sparks in her eyes. She was provoked and obviously taunting.

"Watch me!"

He didn't even turn his head as she darted towards the ladder leading to the springboard. He had another visitor to attend to—Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla—who, puffing like a porpoise, was climbing onto the float at his side. Garbed in a red and white striped jersey he resembled a huge barber's pole.

"Kind Christopher!" he roared. "I'll say this baby can show 'em a few stunts! Dove off the other side of the float, Steve old flivver, and came up on this one. You bet your grandfather's wooden leg!" His voice dropped a note as he jerked his thumb in the direction of Miss Etheldreda Satterfield now well on her way up the ladder behind them. "Likes me better and better every day. Tripped me up this morning right here on the raft while I was going by and I went flat on my face in the sea. I guess that's

showing something more than a little friendly interest in a man."

Quarrendar turned at his words and both of them regarded the youthful figure on the springboard. The rebellious sparks were still in Etheldreda's eyes. She looked as though she were meditating either matrimony or murder. Her arms swept up over her head until her hands met, palm outward, and she shot in a glorious flight head down for the waiting waters. With scarcely a ripple the leader of Barque Haven's younger generation vanished from sight.

"Dives like a fish!" shouted the pride of Walla Walla. "Hits the water like a knife going through cheese!"

Together they watched the smooth Atlantic for the reappearance of the impossible child. Unaccountably the time seemed to drag and still no Etheldreda bobbed up from the waves.

"Can't be reading a book down there. D'you suppose she's got a date with a merman? She can stay under longer'n I can, at that."

Twenty yards away the head and shoulders of Etheldreda Satterfield rose out of the depths. She let out a yell that brought the entire beach to its feet.

"Help!"

Then she sank.

"My God!" ejaculated Weedon. "She must have busted her back! And I'm so fat I'll never get there in time!"

As he spoke a pair of heels shot past his nose. Quar-

rendar had dived in a long flat take-off before the echoes of Etheldreda's cry had died away. He was conscious that his arms and legs were hurling him through the water with clean, hard, racing strokes but oddly enough his brain was cool and working rapidly. He knew the ordinary rescue technique. If she came up again everything would be all right.

She came up not five yards away. "Help!" she cried and made a vigorous splashing. "Help!"

He had swept around behind her and had her in the proper grip before she could go down for the second time. She appeared to be fairly conscious.

"Be quiet!" he shot out. "I've got hold of you. Now, take it easy and I'll land you on the float in no time."

Passively Etheldreda relaxed as she felt his expert clutch. She lay on her back, making brave but feeble motions with her hands, as Quarrendar headed for the raft with his burden. But they never reached its piles.

"Grab the back of the canoe, Steve." Bill Weedon, in the little wooden craft that was used by the lazy to paddle out to the springboard, loomed up above their heads. "I'll run you into the beach. Damned fine work, old flivver. I never saw a quicker piece of rescue in my life."

Trailing through the water with Quarrendar's hand fast to the stern they were swept to land amid a wild, ringing medley of shouts and cheers. Barque Haven's summer population was crowding down to the ocean rim. A full dozen were plunging out waist-high to

help rescuer and rescued. Eager hands plucked Quarrendar and Etheldreda from the foam and bore them up the beach to the nearest marquee.

"Roll her on a barrel!"

"Roll 'em both on a barrel, quick!"

"Is she dead yet?"

"First drowning we've ever had at Barque Haven."

"Oh, Stephen, you're a *wonderful* hero again!"

He tore himself, not without some difficulty, from the hands of a throng which appeared doubtful whether to carry him to shelter as a casualty or hoist him onto their shoulders in a triumphal march. Already Etheldreda had been assisted into the shade where she was sitting up shaking damp tresses out of her eyes. About her swirled a feminine mass, all anxious to render first aid. For a corpse she appeared to be doing quite well.

Her lips moved. One remove from a watery grave Etheldreda Satterfield had a request to make.

"Give me a lipstick, somebody," said the remarkable child.

Once more came the swift rush of comment.

"She's delirious!"

"Aren't they going to roll her over anything?"

"Gee, but that kid's got nerve!"

Etheldreda searched the faces surrounding her with eyes that were bright and inquiring. She was a well woman again. Quarrendar was bending above her with the natural anxiety of the rescuer concerning the health of the victim he has plucked from destruction.

Out of the corner of his eye he could make out Mary Jane Devens Smith, standing on the edge of the crowd and surveying the scene with an interested air. She alone, amid the general tumult, appeared cool and in full possession of her senses.

"Stephen," said Etheldreda loudly, "you saved my life!"

A tremendous cheer spread from the marquee to the farthest end of the beach. The chorus rang.

"He saved her life!"

"Quarrendar saved her life!"

Already someone in a bathing suit had covered the distance that separated the beach from the Barque Haven Arms and was shouting the tidings to a thrilled veranda. Handkerchiefs were being waved from the front of the hotel.

"He sure did," thundered Bill Weedon. "Dove past me like a bolt of blue lightning before I could even move. Was swimming to shore with her in less time than it takes a rabbit to hop for a piece of lettuce. Can't beat Steve for fast action."

"What happened?" burst in an excited voice. "What happened to Etheldreda?"

That young lady surveyed her admirers calmly. "Don't ask me, you dumb-bells. All I know is that when I came up I couldn't move. So I went down again. No, you don't see your whole past life in front of you in a flash. I remembered I'd forgotten to mail a letter this morning, that's all."

Her eyes were on Quarrendar, who made a rapid

motion as though to leave. Etheldreda Satterfield had more than made a quick recovery, she had rounded into appalling health. But the crowd ringed him round and thrust him even closer to her. She put up a small, firm hand.

"I'll never be able to forget it, Stephen. Thanks a lot."

Could you blame a person whose life you had just saved if her palm pressed yours with fervor? Could you blame her if her eyes were full of emotion? Probably not, but none the less Quarrendar struggled out of the marquee into the sunlight. He wanted to be by himself. Down from the hotel a little group was hurrying bearing blankets, smelling salts and other remedies for drowning folk. They were due to be disappointed.

"Of course," rose a clear, gay voice, "of course, now he's saved her life he'll marry her."

It was that of Mary Jane Devens Smith speaking.

"They always do," shouted enthusiastic tones. "What an ideal couple!"

For an instant there was silence, pregnant with potentialities. Then came the rapid hum of dozens of voices, little snatches of pleased exclamation, the rush and chatter of a crowd into which a new and enthralling idea has been flung. They were off; the entire Barque Haven Arms was off on its latest tangent. It wouldn't be a real rescue unless it led to orange blossoms and an organ throbbing overhead among the arches. From now on everybody would be after him

to marry Etheldreda. And Mary Jane Devens Smith had started it with an uncanny feminine intuition for the exact moment in which to spring a sensation. Just wait until he got her alone!

He almost bumped into the mahogany lifeguard who was puffing his pipe on the outskirts of the crowd.

"I have a question to ask you," he burst forth heatedly. "Isn't it your job on this beach to rescue anybody who seems to be drowning? You never moved to go near the water. I saw you when I came in. What kind of a lifeguard do you call yourself anyhow?"

The native son removed his pipe and spat reflectively. He did not appear to mind the hard words that were being cast at him. His capable eye looked more capable than ever.

"Who said anybody was drownin'?"

"I did. You must be blind as well as deaf and dumb. Do you mean to tell me you didn't see what happened?"

"I ain't blind. Nor I ain't deaf. And I ain't so dumb, son." The lifeguard grinned amiably. "When there ain't no need for me I don't calculate to horn in."

"Not when somebody's drowning?"

"Drownin', my eye. When anybody's got enough air in their lungs to let out a yell you kin hear a mile away and kin tread water while they're doin' it so's their head and shoulders are clear out o' the ocean they ain't drownin'. Not by a dozen jugfuls."

"What do you mean?" Quarrendar practically

staggered where he stood. He felt as though the sands of the whole beach were shifting treacherously under his feet. "Are you trying to tell me that girl wasn't drowning?"

"I sure am, son." The pipe was shifted expertly. "You've been and gone and fell for a fine fake, you have. Not that you didn't do a good job of it. But that there young lady was just puttin' up a bluff. She swims better'n you or I kin. They ain't a drop o' water in her. She was better off'n you when you brung her in. I seen her helpin' you along half the time." There came a moment of deadly pause before he resumed. "No, son, you kin fire me off your beach if you want to. But all that young lady was lookin' for was to be rescued by a partickler party. I ain't namin' no names."

Behind him the marquee still buzzed with excited chatter. Etheldreda, the rescued, was being congratulated, cooed about, raised to the summits of celebrity. Quarrendar felt strangely chilled all over. Etheldreda's amazing recovery once she had been placed on shore, the strange calm in her glance, her instant and loud announcement that he had saved her life—here were recollections that were utterly convincing. The lifeguard was right. He remembered the look in her eyes as she had dived from the springboard. He had not counted on the guile of the younger generation. He had rebuffed her advances on the float and she had turned the tables on him in less than sixty seconds. Etheldreda Satterfield was an appalling person.

"I take back everything I've said," he declared wearily. "But we'll never prove it on her. It can't be done."

"Never," remarked the mahogany lifeguard. "These wimmen are too durned smart. I've married two of 'em and I know. If that young lady's out after you like it looks, son, you better keep both eyes peeled. And that ain't goin' to do you much good, either."

The sound of distant applause sent Quarrendar's gaze towards the hotel. Half-way up the lawn gleamed the red and white-striped barber's pole bathing suit of Bill Weedon, whose booming tones were raised in elocution. Quarrendar knew well enough what was going on up there. The pride of Walla Walla was delivering another oration, roaring forth his own highly-colored version of the rescue in which his friend Quarrendar would appear with a halo above his head. Once more force of circumstances had flung him into a leading rôle and the Barque Haven Arms would hail him as a hero. After Weedon's speech on the veranda he had never been able to persuade anyone that he hadn't saved the whole hotel from destruction by fire. After this bit of rhetoric it would be useless to battle against the tide of public opinion which again would joyously elevate him to the heights. Go up and inform the Barque Haven Arms that the rescue was a fake, that Etheldreda Satterfield had been merely putting on a private show with the object of capturing him for her own? Impossible. Kind hands would thrust him into a chair while people rushed for compresses to put

on his head. No, he would have to smile and bear it, take the storm of congratulations and play the part of the modest, daredevil rescuer. But Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith who had made the atrocious suggestion that he would now proceed to marry Etheldreda would have to be settled with at once.

"They're taking her up to the hotel. Aren't you going to help her?" An excited guest had dashed up to Quarrendar, gesturing towards the group moving off the beach in the center of which he could make out Etheldreda walking bravely amid her following. "She wouldn't let us send for a stretcher. She says she feels perfectly all right now."

"I'm delighted to hear it," said Quarrendar drily. "If you're going up to the hotel you might tell Etheldreda's mother that I suggest she lie down for the rest of the day." He meant every word of that bit of advice. "She's had quite a strain you know on the nerves and—er—imagination."

The guest darted off, proud to be the bearer of a message from the man of the hour and towards him Quarrendar saw another old acquaintance approaching. The eyes of Adrienne Chalmers were wide with worship. She undulated gracefully down upon him.

"O-oh, Stephen, the whole place can't talk about *anything* but you. I never, *never* had a husband who'd have dared to do what you did. I do *so* admire a real hero. They're such a *rarity* these days. Will you rescue *me* if I ever sink in the ocean?"

Not once in the month or more of their acquaintance

had Quarrendar seen the dashing Adrienne approach within ten yards of the water and no one ever would. He mustered a smile, however.

"From eleven to one every morning and from four to five in the afternoon I shall be on the beach, Adrienne, prepared to rescue anybody and everybody. That's a promise. You can inform the whole hotel of it."

"Now, you're trying to be funny, Stephen. You don't know how *serious* I am. I'd just *love* to have a man throw me over his shoulder and swim to shore with me. It would be *thrilling*. I *know* I'd marry him."

She actually took a step towards the waves and her ringed hands went up to the fastenings of the beach cloak. Was Adrienne about to cast herself into a foot of water and clamor for a savior? Quarrendar somehow didn't feel at all in the mood for any more rescues that morning. He must say something and that quickly.

"Aren't you forgetting our friend Mr. Barnes?" he suggested. "I know he'd be glad to pluck you from the sea."

"Cyrus is a darling," cooed Adrienne. "But he's *too* shy for *anything*. He's like a little flower in the woods. You're *ever* so much handsomer and stronger, Stephen. No woman could *possibly* feel afraid with you for a moment."

The bewitching orbs melted soulfully as they clung to his. Adrienne, it seemed, might be pursuing Mr. Cyrus Barnes but that did not prevent her from casting an expert eye at the rest of the field.

"I'm so *unhappy* when I'm not married," she breathed, and paused hopefully. There was no comment from Quarrendar. "But you can't always get the person you want. I've learned *that.* It's *just* like shopping in a store. You have to take something else instead."

Fifteen minutes later Quarrendar felt himself free at last. The beach had thinned to almost the point of desertion. His hand had been wrung by well over a score of admirers and their congratulations still dinned in his ears. Now he was striding as swiftly as possible along the sand beside a row of bathing cabins with just ahead of him the shapely figure of Mary Jane Devens Smith. He hadn't had a vestige of a chance to reach her in the crowd that had been surging about him. He wanted to catch her before she went up to the hotel. There was much between them that called for explanation.

"Jane," he called. "Jane, wait a minute!"

She halted in front of her cabin, one hand on the latch of its door. Her face glowed radiantly under the scarf that bound her locks. She looked like some nymph of the sea poised for instant flight.

"I'm in a hurry," she said lightly.

He sprang onto the wooden walk beside her. Slender limbs, white shoulders, intoxicated him with their nearness. He wanted to take her in his arms and hold her, clasp her close while blue sea and blue sky merged in a background of bliss. Yet all the time, he realized, he was furious with her for a public betrayal.

"Jane, what are you trying to do anyhow? That rescue of Etheldreda ——"

"She's a very charming person, Stephen."

"Wait till I tell you what ——"

"You saved her life, didn't you?"

"I most certainly did not!"

"And she's very, very grateful to you, isn't she?"

"Jane!"

The girl's laugh was clear, tormenting. The door swung open and a gay hand waved. The next instant he was facing blank wood, and splintery wood at that.

"Jane! I shan't move from here until I get one piece of information out of you! Will you tell me just why you thought it was necessary to announce what you did about Etheldreda and myself? You had better tell the truth."

"If you get engaged yourself you lose all the matches you've made, don't you?" her voice drifted out to him. "I thought it was a very splendid idea when it came to me. I think a lot more of it now. Try and persuade people Etheldreda isn't going to marry her rescuer, Stephen, if you like. It won't do you a bit of good."

"But that rescue was all a fake!" he shouted. "You didn't know that, did you?"

There was silence for an instant behind the barrier of the door, broken by a gorgeous trill of laughter.

"Of course I knew it wasn't real. You see I put Etheldreda up to it myself. All's fair in love and war, and we're at war. Go away, Stephen, I'm dressing."



[IX]

ETHELDREDA SATTERFIELD was heading directly towards him and Stephen Quarrendar could not move. It was after dinner and the foyer of the Barque Haven Arms was still enjoying its latest sensation, the romance of which appeared to be undimmed by the passage of a full week. People were always stepping aside as they were doing now to give Etheldreda free access to the young man who had rescued her. They made a place for him next to her whenever he approached. They were putting them together at sailing parties, beach picnics, excursions by motor to distant dancing spots, country club teas. Everywhere he went he found himself inexorably paired with the charming Miss Satterfield.

"Here comes Stephen," the whisper would rise. "He'll want to sit beside Etheldreda."

How much of this was due to the abominable strategy of Mary Jane Devens Smith he could not definitely state, but he had his own suspicions and he writhed. She had started the entire affair, by her own confession, and she gave every appearance of enjoying it to the utmost. About him he could feel a net being woven, of silken meshes, but a net just the same from which it would require a desperate struggle to free himself. The young lady from New York and Denver, whose demure glance he caught from the edge of the circle of interested guests was far too brilliant an adversary. If she maintained her present high level of manœuvers she would win the Barque Haven Arms away from him yet.

"Oh, there you are, darling," Etheldreda announced with dismaying possessiveness while smiles of sympathy and understanding ringed them round. "You're going to take me for a moonlight sail. Just you and I. Etheldreda wants to be alone with Stephen. Let's leave this ghastly mob."

"They have so much they want to talk over with each other."

He directed a particularly enraged look towards Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith, the author of that remark, who seemed to have taken over the duty of being Etheldreda's best friend and counsellor. He was certain that in the privacy of the Jane and Georgette Shoppe, where feminine confidences were exchanged over chic hats

and colorful frocks, she was brightly distributing just such observations so that they would do the most good.

"Sorry, Etheldreda," he invented firmly. "But I'm due at a cottage down the line for bridge."

"Then I'll go with you. They'll be glad to have somebody to liven up the tables. This child is bored to tears."

"They'll have to learn how to play together," Mary Jane Devens Smith was offering a further contribution. "Young married people always play partners."

A flutter of assent hailed her words. The entire Barque Haven Arms was forcing romance upon Etheldreda and Stephen Quarrendar—happily, outrageously. He was being flung to the lions to make a summer holiday. He shuddered. Mr. Cyrus Barnes and himself were in about the same situation. But there was no slender, violet-eyed, deft intriguer pressing the interests of Adrienne.

"Some other time, Etheldreda. I'm afraid the party is all made up."

She stood before him in the scantiest of evening frocks, a large orchid adorning one shoulder and a cigarette protruding from a foot-long amber holder which she balanced expertly. She was a highly personable example of youth on a rampage. Her laugh rang confidently.

"Enjoy your freedom while you can, darling." The word was falling these days readily, much too readily, from her decorative lips. The impossible Etheldreda knew what she was about. "You can run over and

pick me up at the Blue Schooner dance place when you're through. I'll take the crowd over there. It's only twenty miles. How about telling your tavern to have scrambled eggs and bacon ready for us when we get back in the dawn?"

She had disappeared, followed by her contemporaries, in a whirl of laughter and shouts. Somehow, some way he had to break the veil of illusion that was rapidly being wound about them in full sight of the hotel. She would get him yet, if he didn't. She almost had him as it was.

"And now," he said vigorously to Mary Jane Devens Smith who, amazingly enough, had tarried, "I want to speak to you."

"I'm listening, Stephen."

"You're deliberately trying to put over an engagement between Etheldreda Satterfield and myself so that not only Bill Weedon is to be eliminated but I'll lose all my matches according to that crazy provision in the will."

"We both know that." She tossed her brown-dusky head lightly as though the affair were of no consequence. "What's the use of going over it all again?"

"Because I'm not in the least in love with Etheldreda and I never will be! She is behaving as though I were her personal property in front of the entire place."

"Don't you think," murmured the girl, "that I'm managing her campaign nicely?"

"So you're responsible for her technique! For all

this business of claiming me as her very own! For the love-light in her eye and the lipstick on ——"

"Don't shout, Stephen. And I think you're being very, very rude to Etheldreda, who is wild about you."

"She is not! It's all your doing!"

"I am sure," said Mary Jane Devens Smith proudly, "that I should not presume to assist a couple into matrimony unless I thought they were made for each other. You don't happen to share that view. You want Adrienne and Mr. Barnes ——"

As though the words had been a signal the melancholy features of Mr. Cyrus Barnes appeared at Quarrendar's shoulder.

"She's on my trail again," he groaned. "I can see the altar fires in her eye. She stopped me in the corridor and tried to pick a thread off my coat. Wasn't any thread there! She'll be here any minute. I want a cigar in peace!"

"The country club is just up back of the grove," said the girl clearly. "No one would ever think of looking for you there. And I shan't tell where you are."

"I never thought of that," uttered Mr. Barnes as though reprieved from some ghastly fate. "I'll go and smoke two cigars. I'll smoke three. I'll smoke a box. I won't come back till everybody's gone to bed. My God, but they stay up late in this place!"

"Is every romance in this hotel scheduled to start a regular tug-of-war between us?" demanded Quarrendar as Mr. Barnes vanished from view. "You're doing your best to break that one up too."

A delightful smile was visited upon him.

"Of course. I want the Barque Haven Arms. That ought to account for everything I do."

"It does. You're stooping to all kinds of things. I never would have thought it of you, Jane."

"No? You really don't know anything about me, Stephen. When you do you won't like me at all."

"I will!" he was on the point of shouting. "I'll like you forever and ever. You're a brainy little bit of loveliness and guile. I can't help liking you." But the words never came out. He had stopped himself just in time. She had proclaimed too often that they were at war and she was defeating him at practically every turn.

Then the Quarrendar smile appeared. "Oh, Adrienne," he called to the charming figure that had just entered the foyer. "I just saw a friend of yours strolling up to the country club. I gathered that he was looking for you."

"How lovely!" breathed Adrienne and directed her steps to the night outside.

"So you see I can play that game myself," he grinned. "Who knows what that kindly word of information may bring forth?"

"It won't bring out anything I can't prevent," observed the girl confidently. "And I think—I think—I've started something between you and Etheldreda that nobody can stop."

"Jane," he announced jubilantly, "you will never win the Barque Haven Arms by any such fine Italian

plotting. Our friend Bill Weedon hasn't said anything to me about it but I doubt if he is unduly cast down by the rumors you're responsible for. He's a hard man to beat is Bill Weedon. And I know he's just as crazy about Etheldreda as ever. So here and now is where I smash that idea of any romance between us on the head."

"And where are you going in such a hurry?"

From ten feet away he smiled at her. "I am about to seek out and find that patrician dowager Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield." Inspiration, burning and reckless, had descended on him in a flash as he had looked into deep-fringed violet eyes and caught the curve of delicate, defiant lips. Let himself be considered the future husband of Etheldreda while this radiant girl was around? Never. "I shall approach the dragon with the immediate object of informing her, with all tact and gracefulness, that there is absolutely nothing between myself and the wild child who is her daughter. It may seem an unusual step but the situation calls for strong and direct remedies. I can't very well tell Etheldreda that she is nothing in my bright young life."

"It wouldn't stop her! Not while I'm here."

"But Etheldreda's mother will put the fastest end you ever saw to the romantic gossip you're so busy winding about us. No mother with a highly marriageable daughter is going to allow her to be talked about to any such extent if there's nothing in it."

"I don't suppose so." The girl was thoughtful, then permitted herself the wraith of a smile. "Will you

see her right away, Stephen, and spoil all my lovely plans for you?"

"I'm taking a turn up to the country club first. A brisk walk in the cool of the evening will put all my remarks in perfect order. Carefulness of speech and delicacy of approach are required above all else in the coming interview. And besides I'd like to take just one look to see how Mr. Barnes and Adrienne are coming along. Your pillar of hope should be crumbling, Jane."

It was less than twenty minutes later that he found himself once more in the Barque Haven Arms. The smile of victory had brightened his face all the way down from the club house through the fragrance of the pines. He had seen what he had seen in the hammock on a shadowed porch. A white arm had been glimpsed alluringly close to a masculine shoulder and the presence of a third party was clearly unnecessary. His plans were maturing to perfection.

"Isn't it *wonderful* to be alive on a night like this?" Adrienne was trilling. "Just *think,* Cyrus, we two in a hammock together."

"You followed me. You followed me from the hotel when I came up here." Mr. Barnes spoke wildly. "You're always right behind me like a bill collector. Oh, my God!"

A long-drawn shudder ran through his frame as a lovely arm circled his neck but his limbs betrayed him. He could not rise.

"There, Cyrus dear," breathed Adrienne softly.

"That's what you've been needing *all* your life. Someone to love you. We'll be *so* happy. I'm *always* happy when I'm married."

"It's horrible!" emerged an unearthly groan. "It's ghastly! I won't walk up any aisle. I won't do it, I won't do it, I won't do it!"

"Just a quiet little wedding, Cyrus. I don't have big church weddings any more."

"T-three husbands!"

"Yes, Cyrus dear. But I was *so* happy with them."

For a moment there was silence and the arm of Adrienne strayed just a little from about Mr. Barnes' neck. Cautiously he put one foot forward and tapped the floor. A glint of low cunning replaced the panic in his eyes. The limbs of Mr. Barnes were once more of service, their paralysis had passed. From where they sat it was not far to the dark mass of the grove, by night almost a jungle of pines.

"I've got to get a match!" he gasped and made as if to rise but slender hands were upon him and he sank back, spent.

"Cyrus," murmured Adrienne, "*do* look at that *gorgeous* star!"

He looked and saw it floating in the north—a magic beacon upon a sea of dusk. But now it seemed to grow larger, to fill the sky. The eyes of Mr. Barnes became slightly glazed. Though words tottered out from under his moustache it was all too evident that his mind was a total blank.

A moment later he blinked like a man suddenly

aroused from the healthy slumber induced by a blackjack. Overhead the star, reduced to its normal size, shone calmly in its place as though nothing in particular had happened. But in the lovely orbs of Adrienne dwelt a permanent and joyous light.

Mr. Barnes put a shaking hand to his forehead. "I didn't—I didn't—don't tell me I ——" he began with a horrible questioning in his accents.

"Cyrus dear," said Adrienne, calmly, "we'd *much* better be getting back to the hotel. *Everybody* will be wondering where we are."

The foyer was almost deserted as they passed through. Like a man in a trance Mr. Barnes staggered up to the desk.

"Tell Qwaw-qwaw-qwaw—tell Quarrendar I want to see him."

"Yes, sir," said the clerk briskly. The clerks at the Barque Haven Arms were always brisk and alert. "I'll have him notified."

At this moment, as it happened, in a corner of the veranda Stephen Quarrendar was facing Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield. He had caught a glimpse of her stately figure as he had ascended the steps between the pillars and he had wasted no time. Day after day she had been surrounded by her little court of wicker chair admirers to whom she acted in the dual rôle of ruler and arbiter. They heard what she had to say and agreed with her always. Etheldreda's mother was that kind of a person. All other sound had a habit of ceasing when Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield spoke.

He had seated himself nonchalantly in a chair opposite her with a preliminary glance up and down the veranda. All went well. There were no ears within hearing.

"Good evening, Stephen," beamed Mrs. Satterfield with a distinctly maternal smile. "How is it you are not out with the other young people enjoying themselves this evening?" Without waiting for any answer she propounded a startling theory: "Young people will be young people."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Quarrendar ingratiatingly. "And your charming daughter ——"

"Dancing with the rest somewhere down the Cape. Etheldreda will be back by midnight as I instructed her. She has never failed to obey me yet."

Etheldreda Satterfield, most undoubtedly, hadn't paid any attention to what her mother said since she was twelve years old. It was better, however, to allow the observation to pass unchallenged.

"It's about Etheldreda I wanted to speak to you, Mrs. Satterfield. Naturally you must have heard people ——"

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield's gaze became positively benignant. It declared that she was warming to the young man opposite her as she warmed to few human beings. Something was wrong somewhere.

"There is always bound to be talk in a large summer hotel, my dear Stephen. A mother has ears as well as anyone else. You may be sure"—the smile was all-enfolding—"that Etheldreda and yourself have my

full approval. It is seldom that one meets a well-mannered young man in these times."

"But, Mrs. Satterfield, I want to explain to you ——"

Gone was the casual ease with which Quarrendar had opened the conversation which was to lift him out of difficulty. He was sinking deeper by the minute into a morass of horrifying depth. If he failed to wrest himself free and that immediately he would be engulfed beyond hope of salvation.

"I do not demand that my daughter's husband should be a millionaire. A modest sufficiency of worldly wealth will be plenty. Etheldreda's tastes are quiet." Once more Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield's eyes roved appreciatively over the façade of the Barque Haven Arms. "Such a pleasant hotel," she murmured. "The rooms are charming."

She seemed mentally to be debating whether she desired a chamber with a southern or an eastern exposure to be reserved for her permanently. One hand came up for silence.

"Ah, yes, what was I saying? Good manners and a high moral tone are the qualities which I admire most in a young man. Character, my dear Stephen, character. Someone was just telling me how well you have assumed many of the responsibilities of the hotel."

Into the maze of Quarrendar's whirling thoughts one clear idea came and he grasped at it. There must be a new, swift angle of attack to combat this startling turning of the conversation. He would show this born

mother-in-law that Stephen Quarrendar was not on the list of eligibles.

"I have a friend," he got out hurriedly, "who is very much taken by Etheldreda. He has all the character any man will ever need. Absolutely honest, upright, natural. Heart of gold and all that."

"Yes, Stephen?" The tone was practically a purr.

"He's told me he's crazy about her. But he thinks like everybody else that somebody has cut in ahead of him. I know that isn't so. Just at present he's sort of keeping himself in the background but I want you to know there's not a finer chap in the world. Rafts of money."

"Go on, my dear Stephen."

"And so—and so—well, I'd like to see him make a go of it with Etheldreda." His forehead was damp and his face felt as though a furnace glow had been playing over it. But he had done his best to tactfully put over the idea that Bill Weedon, the bounding pride of Walla Walla and not himself was the suitor for Etheldreda's hand. He hadn't meant to bring this information up but there it was.

A peculiar sound arose. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was practically gurgling with delight.

"What old-fashioned modesty! Delightful, delightful! To think that any young man of to-day would state his case with all that delicacy."

"But, Mrs. Satterfield, it isn't myself I'm speaking for. I'm telling you about ——"

Desperately he fumbled for cool and convincing

words that refused to be summoned. The maternal gleam in the eyes of Etheldreda's mother was magnified tenfold. Her voice caressed. It soothed and almost sang.

"You mustn't say another word, my dear boy. I know how nervous it makes a young man to interview the parents. Come to me again and tell me all about it again when you're calmer. You needn't worry about my answer, Stephen. Etheldreda will make whoever she marries happy."

A stricken young man rose a bit blindly to his feet and reeled away. At least Quarrendar felt that he must be reeling. He had done his best to explain matters to Mrs. Satterfield, he had tried to clear the ground for good old Bill Weedon, and he had, apparently, merely gained a mother-in-law. He was a son to Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield now, no doubt about it.

Suddenly he stopped and smote his forehead. He had the agonizing, horrible suspicion that Mary Jane Devens Smith had been before him, that she had told Etheldreda's mother he was coming to plead his own case and needed helping out in his recital. She had had plenty of time for such a thrust after he had told her he was taking a saunter to the club. It would be very like her. No wonder Mrs. Satterfield had been so eager to seize the conversational reins away from him. Slim loveliness was baffling him at every turn.

"Mr. Barnes would like to see you, Mr. Quarrendar," sounded the efficient tones of the desk clerk. "He's phoned down twice from his room."

Abruptly Quarrendar's head came up. There might be some news, after all, to counteract his own shattering defeat.

"He looks bad," volunteered the clerk pleasedly.

He looked dying. All thought of his own difficulties were swept away for the moment as Quarrendar inspected the occupant of Room 23. Mr. Barnes sat on the edge of the bed and strange noises issued from him.

"Something hit me. One of those damned stars grew as big as a house and this thing came down out of the sky like a white light and I went numb all over. I must have gone clean out of my head. She says I said I'd marry her. I don't remember anything that happened. My God, Quarrendar, we're engaged!"

"Adrienne," smiled Quarrendar, "is a very charming person."

Mr. Barnes staggered to his feet and commenced to pace up and down the room, brushing Quarrendar aside and muttering to himself.

"I'm a happy, happy man. I'm a happy, happy man. I'm a happy, happy man." This kept up for two minutes at the end of which time he turned desperately.

"It's in a book somewhere. If you keep saying you're happy long enough all of a sudden you'll find you are. I'm a happy, happy man. I'm a happy, happy man. I'm a happy, happy man." He resumed his pacing. At this rate Room 23 would soon be in need of a new carpet.

"If you ask my honest opinion," volunteered Quar-

rendar, " I should say you're a lucky one. I've known Adrienne for sometime now. It's too early I suppose to inquire about any arrangements for the wedding? "

" It'll be soon. Horribly soon. She's going to attend to everything. She's had the experience. I'm a happy, happy man."

Eventually the happy, happy man became quieter, perhaps out of sheer weakness.

" I guess I'll go to bed," he husked. " When a man's asleep he forgets his troubles."

" You may feel differently about it in the morning," suggested Quarrendar from the door. " Cheer up, Mr. Barnes. A lot of men would think they were pretty lucky if they were in your place. And you'd better not open your windows too wide to-night. There's a bit of a cold wind comes up around dawn and you don't want to get it in your system."

" That's generally fatal, isn't it? " asked Mr. Barnes with a flicker of hope. Then his face fell. " No use. She'd only come and nurse me through it."

Number Two. Match Number Two had appeared in full bloom in the Barque Haven Arms. Another romance could be marked off on the list demanded by Great-uncle Homer's document and there remained only one more to be achieved. Quarrendar felt the rush of elation sweeping him. It came to him in a burst of illuminating light that his real triumph lay not in arriving within easy grasp of a $250,000 summer hotel but in showing Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith that he could beat her in fair fight. She had striven to keep

the moody one and his bewitching pursuer far apart and he had been too strong for her. Already, he realized, the swift, rushing struggle between them was transcending in importance the stake for which it was being conducted.

She was standing by the door leading to the night beyond the foyer as he came down, a filmy light wrap about her slender form. Bill Weedon stood beside her, wearing the festive air of one planning a celebration.

"Hurry it up, Steve. Jump for the gangplank. We're late enough as it is already."

"Late for what?" He was facing the girl, with the consciousness of a task fulfilled, an object almost won. "You'll both be glad to hear, I know, that our friends Mr. Cyrus Barnes and Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers are engaged. I've just left the corpse—I mean the happy bridegroom-to-be."

"I guess we congratulate you too, don't we, Steve old flivver?" Honesty, tinged with a trace of soberness, shone from Bill Weedon's face. "Put it there and no hard feelings. The best man won, that's all. It's tough to have to quit but I know when I'm out of it."

"Out of what?" he demanded promptly. "You're not out of anything."

"Etheldreda, brother. Maybe I never did have a look in with her. I'm kind of counting on horning in as best man if that's all right by you."

Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, had stolidly

swallowed his own disappointment and was completely at the service of his sworn comrade. Friendship could go no further.

"You needn't worry about Etheldreda and myself," began Quarrendar and stopped, trapped and raging. It would be worse than useless for him to try to make matters clear to this stalwart suitor at the present moment. He couldn't very well inform Bill Weedon that the charming Etheldreda had been staging her own melodrama in the ocean. He would shake his round head in absolute disbelief. The ten days' wonder of the rescue must die away first, the atmosphere must become clear. But what could clear it? Etheldreda was playing her cards with infinite finesse under the guidance of Mary Jane Devens Smith. She was letting public opinion do all the work for her. "Sometime soon," he added lamely, "I want to have about half an hour's quiet conversation with you."

"I am sure," said Mary Jane Devens Smith, "that Stephen will be very interesting. He always is."

The romance of Mr. Barnes and Adrienne did not appear to have disquieted her in the least. The violet eyes were brighter than ever as the three of them moved down the steps at the foot of which glittered the shape of Bill Weedon's aluminum-bodied roadster. Quarrendar lifted himself into the rumble seat as the car began to move forward. His lips were close to a small ear.

"Jane," he whispered, "it is a pleasure to fly through space with you even in somebody else's car. I

hope this gallant ride will never end. Does anybody know where we're going?"

"The Blue Schooner," came the roar from Weedon. The scarlet-wheeled car leaped into a fierce burst of speed. They were out on the moors winging like a comet through the darkness. "Etheldreda asked me to wait and pick you up. She's saving a place for you. To-night's the night we burn up the Cape! I feel wild!"

The small ear had disappeared. Mary Jane Devens Smith was snuggling down in the front seat behind the windshield, once more removed from his ken. He hadn't had the chance as yet to charge her with being responsible for the alarming maternal attitude of Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, which had bound him still closer to her daughter. Soon those bonds would be unbreakable. In all probability she would admit it and laugh at him for falling into her snare.

He knew only too well what he would find at the other end of their furious journey. A long, brilliantly-lit room with a shouting, jazz-mad orchestra and Miss Etheldreda Satterfield exhibiting her most dazzling steps in the middle of the floor, a fluttering, revelling, whirling cyclone of irrepressible youth. She would, as likely as not, be clapping her hands and yelling.

They shot by an indistinct bulk in the dark that sent a sudden aromatic savor drifting across their flight. The tang of the countryside, the spell of wide meadows and fields was in its passing. It came in a clear, cool fragrance driving away the fog from his brain and

revealing his inmost thoughts for a fraction of a second just as they were, not battling amid a whirl of complications and self-set goals.

"Quick, make a wish," rose the girl's voice. "It's sure to come true. We've passed a hay wagon."

It was not until hours later that Quarrendar dared face the actuality of the wish he had made. Was it the glory of her hair that lay, brown-dusky, above the untroubled calm of her forehead; was it the laughing tenderness shadowed in the violet eyes, the adorable cupid's curve of her lips? No—it was all of her.

He knew now that he was in love with Mary Jane Devens Smith, his blithest and bitterest enemy.

And why, at this moment, should an inexplicable memory bring up the tanned face and agreeable smile of a young New Yorker of his own age, now somewhere in distant Europe, and whom he had met just once in the Jane and Georgette Shoppe? It made the third time the recollection had visited him and there was no reason for it at all.

Who was the mysterious stranger, anyhow?

[X]

WORK was good for you when you had worries. Stephen Quarrendar sat in the little managerial sanctum behind the main office and thrust files of papers, accounts, reports to and fro. For some time past it had been dawning on him that a great deal of important labor was connected with the conducting of a prosperous summer hotel. He had hitherto had the impression that such a caravansary ran itself. The guests wandered gracefully about the pillared premises while food appeared from somewhere to feed them when they were hungry and rooms were automatically aired, made up and checked off. Now he knew better.

Plenty of new faces in the Barque Haven Arms this week. The great August rush for seashore and moun-

tains was on and the Cape was coming in for more than its share of visitors. The bus rolling in from the junction brought full loads daily to stream across the foyer to the desk and later to be swallowed up in the life of the place. He was making it part of his business to see that they were comfortable and contented. They seemed excellent guests—pleasant and prosperous with bright daughters and attractive sons. He would make them all like the hotel and want to reserve for it next season. Stephen Quarrendar, owner, Barque Haven Arms, had a pleasant ring.

The chin of a certain young man was set decisively. The hotel business was his real business; he knew that now. It gave him a thrill to saunter through the wide spaces of the Barque Haven Arms, to nod and smile at his guests, to delve into the mysteries of accommodations, upkeep and service, to feel the machinery of a gleaming hostelry running smoothly and without a hitch. There had been no such feeling of exaltation and well-being in the importing house where he had passed the first years of a still rather short career. He had worked eight hours a day in its drab premises but it had been almost a relief, he realized, when the crash came.

"I am wondering if a born hotel man has not at last been loosed upon the world," he murmured. "I certainly feel at home in this game. Give me the Barque Haven Arms and in two or three years I'll make it the biggest success on the Cape."

"Do I hear you asking yourself questions?" Mr.

Arnold, the manager, had entered unnoticed and was smiling his hearty smile. He was no subordinate executive anxious to please a proprietor at any cost. Mr. Arnold said what he thought when he felt like it, standing firmly on his own feet and working with a quiet, unhurried efficiency for the welfare of the rambling structure in his charge. He had a sense of humor also which was a blessing. "I thought I heard you inquiring if you'd make a hotel man."

"You heard correctly, Mr. Arnold. I think I'd rather like to be one."

"Well," said Mr. Arnold, "if I went away for a week and left the place in your keeping I'd expect to find most of it standing when I came back. Go ahead and make all the mistakes you can in the first year, Mr. Quarrendar. That's the way to learn the hotel business. Your great-uncle never came near the office. The new régime is a little different."

He smiled in almost a fatherly manner at his young employer. They were on the best of terms. Mr. Arnold wasn't going to tell Quarrendar that he was the eighth wonder of the hotel business but he did intend to encourage his efforts. Quarrendar grinned.

"We are modernizing an old, established hostelry. We have a Hawaiian orchestra in the dining room and a frock and hat shop in the sun parlor."

He bent again to his labors in an empty room. The housekeeper, it appeared, was reporting that the recent guest in Number 112 had eloped with four hand-monogrammed towels and the spigot of the hot water

faucet. Leon the chef was suggesting a menu for the next evening which resembled a banquet to a visiting foreign envoy. Two of the waitresses, lured by the movie theatre in the village, had failed to appear for duty last night until dinner was half over. Comedy, pathos, romance mingled and swirled from cellar to attic of the Barque Haven Arms as part of its daily routine.

"It's all over," groaned a voice behind him. "I'm a gone man."

Mr. Cyrus Barnes slumped into the chair opposite Quarrendar. His customary despair was blacker and deeper than ever. He plucked wildly at the tangle of his moustache.

"She's getting it all fixed up." He wriggled his neck as though already it felt the yoke descending. "She wants it any day now. She's found a justice of the peace in that village over by the junction who'll stoop to anything. He's going to marry us."

"That's quick work," said Quarrendar. A lightsome mood came over him on the instant. Match Number Two was about to be consummated before his very eyes.

"Quick work? The woman has it reduced to a science. You could drop her in the middle of the Sahara desert and in six hours what'd she turn up with? A man, a marriage license, a minister and four witnesses." His long nose quivered. "She says she always gets married in a hurry. Is everybody around this hotel getting married?"

"Just you and Adrienne at present. Try the ice-

water over yonder, Mr. Barnes. It's quite cool and refreshing."

The melancholy Cyrus wet his handkerchief and passed it blindly over his forehead.

"Now I've spoiled my necktie," he groaned. "What do that Miss Egbert and young Mr. Lewis want to ruin their lives for?"

"Miss Egbert?" Quarrendar recalled a tall, attractive young lady who wandered about the foyer with a copy of a highly-cultural magazine under her arm. Decorative and thoroughly alluring. "Mr. Lewis?" This was a brisk young business man whose implicit confidence in his own abilities had caused the irresponsible to refer to him as "cock-sure Charley." He knew them only casually, possibly speaking to them once every two or three days. "How are they going to ruin their lives?"

"Engaged. This damned hotel is a trap."

"Miss Egbert and Mr. Lewis are engaged?" Quarrendar shot the question at his informant and Mr. Barnes appeared to crumple before it. "Who told you that?"

"They announced it this morning right after breakfast. My God, what a way to start the day! They're both leaving the end of the week, I hear. Won't have to look at their happy faces much longer."

Miss Louise Egbert was a delightful, if somewhat sentimental person, but Quarrendar failed to visualize the sterling worth of the young man known as "cock-sure Charley." Match Number Three had come, un-

heralded, to usher in the first weeks of August. The long, hard battle was finished. The smile of complete triumph wreathed his lips.

"They say she had a quarrel with her sweetheart a couple of years ago," Mr. Barnes was mourning. "When she chucked him or he chucked her she ought to have had sense enough to let well enough alone."

So Miss Louise Egbert had been drawn to another on the rebound. That would explain it all. In fact, it would account for a large number of ill-fated matrimonial assortments.

Great-uncle Homer . . . Barque Haven Arms . . . three love matches . . .

"I've won!" he murmured. "I've won!"

Mr. Barnes had reached out and was fumbling with the nearest paper on the desk, which happened to be the menu for the day. As an announcer of other people's happiness he resembled a sable, croaking raven. Aimlessly his gaze roved the sheet.

"My God!" he shuddered. "Three kinds of r-rice!" and flung it from him. When he removed himself doorwards it was with the bowed head of a stricken man.

Quarrendar slid open a drawer of the desk and drew forth an envelope and notepaper. On the envelope he wrote, "Ethan Hulbert, Esq." and followed it with the New York address. Glorious news in a few minutes would be winging its way to a distant office of the law. Or would a telegram look more important? He would write to Ted Holly too, imparting the glad tid-

ings. Good old Ted would arise and cheer. He had been right; Barque Haven was a perfect nest of romance.

"And now that the Barque Haven Arms is safely in my clutches," he told himself as his pen scratched across the paper, " the next thing to do is to try once more to remove Miss Etheldreda Satterfield from the scene of action. It is high time I took my faithful friend Bill Weedon to one side and explained to him that my intentions towards that young lady amount to zero minus. He can go in and win and may the providence that watches over lovers aid him."

Resolutely he had thrust aside the vision of another charming young lady which thrust itself upon him. For some time now the picture of a radiant small face had been with him to harass and disquiet. He was in love with Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith—all of her—and it would not do him the least bit of good to even think about it. That way lay wildly restless days and sleepless nights. If he married her he would lose the Barque Haven Arms. If she married him she would lose it. He wanted the Barque Haven Arms and so did she. It was the perfect impasse. She regarded him as an adversary to be defeated in open combat and as nothing else. Some way, somehow there might be a trail leading out of the tangle he appeared to have made of his personal affairs but only time could uncover it.

" That is, if it exists," he muttered savagely. " It occurs to me that young Mr. Quarrendar has been

stepping from one collection of turmoil to another for about as long as I can remember. First I invite up here the only girl who shouldn't be on the premises and while we're doing everything we can that is admirably calculated to make us hate each other I go and fall in love with her. She's the cause of the whole trouble."

But he had won out against all her efforts and strategy. Despite himself he felt the lift of exultation. Also despite himself this heartening sensation departed as abruptly as it had come and he saw again brown-dusky hair and violet eyes. It seemed that Mary Jane Devens Smith was smiling at him in her most tantalizing manner.

"She certainly would laugh at me if she knew about it." He writhed in torment. "But she never will know because the last thing I intend to do is tell her. I can't quite see giving my sworn enemy the chance to revel in my hard luck. No, the proper move now is to forget it and clear Etheldreda out of the way, once and for all, before she engineers our engagement. And that would cost me the hotel."

A heart-to-heart talk with Bill Weedon, filled with enthusiastic encouragement and ringing words, was what was called for at present. Etheldreda's wiles, her mother's machinations, the far too brilliant manœuvers of Mary Jane Devens Smith—all these must be swept aside in order to give the field to Bill Weedon. He might as well pile up a few more matches just for friendship's sake.

A spirited bellow resounded along the veranda as he stepped into the sunlight. Bill Weedon was a person never very difficult to find. You simply listened long enough and you located him.

"Come on over, Steve, and join the hen party. Sit down and rest your brains. We aren't talking any sense."

Once again the exuberant personality of the pride of Walla Walla was radiating amid the patrician circle of Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, whose wicker chairs creaked to their small flutters. He had dropped his bulk into the solidest-appearing piece of veranda furniture handy and it was evident that he was about to keep everybody interested and entertained. Etheldreda's mother was stiffening beneath the smile of the large young man who wore an orange scarf with a green shirt. Somebody had to take Bill Weedon away before she came down with a heart attack.

"I'll just wind that fuzz-ball for you, ma'am." Weedon removed from the limp hands of Etheldreda's mother the wool which she was clutching. "Always a pleasure to help a real lady."

His huge fingers promptly reduced the ball to a labyrinth of tangles. It was dropped cheerfully into her lap.

"Didn't seem to come out right that time. Maybe I can do another trick better. Who's got a silk hat and a watch?"

No one had. The circle appeared to be on the verge of nervous prostration. Slowly the air grew chill, the

sunshine died away. They would all take refuge in flight in another moment, seeking a rest for the sight and hearing.

"Outrageous!" murmured Mrs. Satterfield.

"Sure is," agreed Weedon. "This is what I call a dead dump this morning. Everybody sitting around like a lot of eighty-year-olds waiting for the grim reaper. You girls ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

Shattering silence followed his words as a group of horrified dowagers gazed upon this visitant from another sphere.

Someone groped for words and uttered a disjointed sentence. "Your—your daughter Etheldreda, Mrs. Satterfield—I haven't seen her this morning."

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield became herself again on the instant. Her maternal gaze was raying over Quarrendar. She was about to make a remark for his benefit.

"Etheldreda—ah, yes. She is in her room reading a book, I believe. She has a real love for the better sort of literature."

"I saw her with a swell one yesterday," cut in Bill Weedon. "It was so hot you could have used it for a blow torch. When I came through Boston they were jailing people for selling it."

He failed to crumple under the stares that met him on all sides but remained happy, oppressively healthy and clearly anxious to say more.

Quarrendar felt a hand on his arm. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was regarding him graciously, in-

dulgently. Her manner indicated that with superb tact she was disregarding the remarks of a barbarian.

"Any time that you and Etheldreda want to come to me with your little news I shall be ready," she murmured. "I haven't forgotten the other night, Stephen. But I can keep a secret until the proper moment."

She favored the wicker chairs with a beautiful smile, once more the proud, patrician dowager-mother.

"Etheldreda is such a devoted home girl," she pronounced regally.

"I'll say she is!" shouted Bill Weedon. "You ought to have seen her at that new Pirate's Inn place a couple of evenings ago. That kid can dance on top of a table all night and step off bright and shining. She can sling a wicked plate too. Put out a string of Japanese lanterns twenty feet away with one swipe. She'd be a decoration to any home. You bet your grandmother's wig! Any man with red blood in him ought to be glad to pay for the damage she does."

He stamped to his feet and his round face delivered itself of a grin which affirmed that all present were his friends for life. After which he took hold of his belt with both hands and hitched it heartily.

"So long, folks. I'm going to climb into a clean shirt."

The pride of Walla Walla departed with no voice raised to check his going. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield appeared to have lost the power of speech. It was obviously proper too for Stephen Quarrendar to be on his way. This was no moment to approach Weedon

on the subject of renewing his courtship of Etheldreda. His latest effort to ingratiate himself with Etheldreda's mother could hardly be termed a howling success. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield even now might be on the verge of forbidding her daughter to have anything to do with a person like the pride of Walla Walla and for once in her life her daughter might obey her. He would send Bill Weedon back into the lists with fresh hope a trifle later. He himself would wander off now for a little more private pondering on the contrariness of an unjust world, in what direction didn't matter.

Down there by the sea the beach was the usual maelstrom of colors and mirthful shouting. Long smooth waves were swelling in to break their ripples against the sand. But Stephen Quarrendar was not moving towards the beach. He was moving automatically, inevitably, towards the Jane and Georgette Shoppe. He swung into the corridor leading to the sun parlor and stopped short, a few feet from its open door.

Adrienne Chalmers, ravishing in mauve, was floating out and her soulful eyes fell immediately upon him.

"Oh, Stephen," she carolled, "*whatever* makes you in such a hurry? You must have a *teeny* moment to stop and talk to *me*. Isn't it just *lovely* about Cyrus?"

"He's a happy, happy man." Quarrendar smiled in spite of himself at the recollection of the shattered derelict who had presented himself in the office. "I can only repeat my congratulations to you both."

"Cyrus is *such* a darling. I thought he'd *never,*

never propose. He seemed *almost* as immune as you are, Stephen."

The orbs of the bewitching Adrienne melted in soft reminiscence.

"You do *remind* me so of Heyward, my very first. But I knew it wouldn't be *any* use to think of you." She glanced up hopefully and then allowed a sigh to escape. "One can't have *everything* one wants in this world, can one?"

Quarrendar began to edge mechanically away. This was the vision who on the beach had once remarked that marriage was exactly like shopping. If you couldn't get what you wanted you took something else.

"And I know you'd *never, never* change your mind. You're *so* strong-willed."

There was a final caressing glance from the beautiful eyes and Adrienne was moving down the hall. Her last innocent remark was sounding in his ears.

"I just thought you'd like to know. Men *always* do."

A profound sigh of relief emerged from Stephen Quarrendar. He was beginning to feel as though he had had a miraculous escape of some kind. Now he could find Jane.

He turned and there she was, framed delightfully in her own doorway, and hardly six feet distant.

"I couldn't help hearing it all," she said calmly. "You ought not to conduct your many love affairs so close to an open door. How many persons in this hotel do you really intend to marry?"

She raised a dainty hand and commenced to count on its fingers.

"Etheldreda is one. And now Adrienne Chalmers, it seems ——"

"Jane, you can stop right there!" burst out an agitated and thoroughly wrathful young man. "You know what this business with Etheldreda amounts to. You started it and I'm going to put an end to it immediately if not sooner."

"Are you? I haven't heard Mrs. Satterfield denying any rumors yet, Stephen."

"I suppose you're responsible for that?" He had forgotten completely that he was in love with this aggravating young lady. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith was in a hopelessly combative, highly individual mood. The violet eyes were wide and sparkling and a small foot tapped the floor. "No, never mind, you needn't say anything. I can tell the answer for myself."

Jane tossed her head.

"It must be simply wonderful to have every girl in the hotel falling in love with you. First it's Etheldreda, then it's ——"

Once more slim fingers were being checked off. The long-postponed moment of reckoning had come at last. He would put an end to her uncanny mockery with a few illuminating, triumphant statements. He would show a maddening person that Stephen Quarrendar was not one to be flouted indefinitely.

"You might as well know it now, Jane, as any other time. I've won the Barque Haven Arms!"

"How interesting!"

"You don't believe me, maybe. You think it's bragging."

"I never, never would suspect you of that," she murmured demurely.

"We'll let that remark pass. Our last guest the manufacturing magnate and his trained nurse make Romance Number One. Mr. Barnes and Adrienne make Romance Number Two. And Miss Louise Egbert ——"

"I know her very well."

"Miss Louise Egbert and Mr. Charles Lewis—they've just made it public—have provided Romance Number Three. And that, as they say, is that. I've won, Jane. Do you congratulate me on a fair and square fight between us?"

"I most certainly do not. It isn't September yet. Maybe you've made your matches but that doesn't say you can hold them. I'm not through, Stephen."

She sped a debonair, courageous glance at him from under dark lashes.

"No, indeed. No, indeed. No, no, no, indeed! That makes a great many noes, doesn't it?"

"And what," he demanded, "do you plan to do?"

The telephone on the spindle-legged table cut in with a high-pitched, jangling note. Blithely the girl motioned him to silence. Her forehead was serenity itself as she spoke to her hidden caller. If she continued to look like that for another minute he would remember all over again that he was in love with her.

" Oh yes, your hat is ready. You want to come right in and try it on? Do. I'll be here."

" I'll wait," he shot at her. " I don't intend to leave just because another of your hundred and one customers is breaking in on us."

" It'll be interesting if you stay. You don't know yet who it is."

"And I don't care. You say you're not giving up hope of getting the Barque Haven Arms away from me." Quarrendar was returning to the all-important topic under discussion. " How are you figuring on doing it? "

" Wait and see. You'll have plenty to worry about before many hours." Footsteps, light and dancing, were heard outside in the corridor. " She's here. You might start your worrying now."

She burst brightly into the room, her Eton-cropped head smooth and shining and a good deal more powder and lipstick visible than usual. A cigarette clung to her lips at a spirited angle. Miss Etheldreda Satterfield was at the top of her form.

" Well, well, darlings," she cast forth, flicking ash at the nearest rank of frocks. " Who'd have thought to find you two together? I'll have to keep a better eye on that Romeo of mine. Where's the hat, Jane? "

She thrust a scarlet confection over her boyish hair and rushed for the mirror. She did not, however, upset anything on the way although the table rocked slightly.

" Tell me how you like it, Don Juan. You may be paying for Etheldreda's hats yet."

The pert, vivacious face was turned to him. He had to admit that the methods of the younger generation were almost impossible to combat. Etheldreda was driving at him straight and driving harder every day.

"Don't look so shocked. What if I was born without a sense of the proprieties? It's a lot more fun. I'll take the cute little thing. It goes well with my eyebrows."

"I hope," said Mary Jane Devens Smith clearly, "that when you come to pick your trousseau you won't forget the shop."

"Jane!" In spite of himself almost a shout burst from Quarrendar. This was unendurable. He was being handed over to Etheldreda Satterfield bound hand and foot. It was treachery.

"Be quiet, darling," Etheldreda cast at him. "If there's going to be any yelling I want to do it."

She flung the end of her cigarette at the window and pirouetted for another glance at herself in the mirror. Remarks continued to be volleyed forth over her shoulder.

"What do you think of a man who's so old-fashioned he asks a girl's mother for her hand instead of the girl herself? Some sheik I call that. I just about fell dead when my respected parent told me. Whoopee, Stephen?"

The shaft had gone home. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield had given Etheldreda her own version of a badly-bungled interview. Etheldreda had him now. He caught the reflection of her delighted young smile

in the glass. Mary Jane Devens Smith with her chin high was surveying him, undisturbed. Then a quick, vivid smile parted her lips and her laughter came in a ripple that tortured.

"I've found Stephen an excellent landlord."

It was as though she were being asked for a reference for him and had given the only one she could think of.

"Jane!"

"He ought to be quite a help about the house."

"Jane!"

"He has rather a temper at times. But he says he's going to own a big hotel."

So here was the solution of the debonair confidence with which she had received his news of the winning of the Barque Haven Arms. She would see to it that his engagement to Etheldreda Satterfield was announced. Probably she would attend to the necessary publicity herself. And he could never prove to Mr. Ethan Hulbert that it wasn't so. Entirely too many people—in fact, the whole summer population of Barque Haven—would enthusiastically bear witness to his romance with the youthful charmer he had rescued. Every match which he had made to date would be automatically cancelled from the reckoning by that paragraph in the will which the girl seemed to know by heart. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith was snatching complete victory from defeat in the most nefarious manner.

"Jane!" he said fiercely for the third time.

"What's the row?" inquired Etheldreda. "If it's a good one I'm in on it. My Romeo looks as though someone had poked him sweetly with a hot iron. Smile, Stephen, smile. You're taking your Etheldreda out to a place she knows for luncheon. I just thought of it."

The impossible child was acting as though she had a mortgage on every hour of his day. Maybe she did. Maybe he was hers by right of capture.

"It's too bad," he said shortly. "I'd promised to discuss some business with Bill Weedon at lunch today."

Etheldreda tossed her head.

"That package of bad news? That wild Westerner? He falls over his own feet."

"Don't worry about Stephen," encouraged Mary Jane Devens Smith. "He'll go with you. I'll explain it all to Bill Weedon. I'm going out with him in his car this afternoon."

Quarrendar clenched his fists and then let them fall, loosely. Too often in large summer hotels of the past had he seen the sudden transference of interest from one object to another on the part of an ardent wooer. Had the switch come? Was Bill Weedon now the cavalier of Mary Jane Devens Smith—bounding, huge-hearted Bill Weedon in whose company she had always been gay and mirthful? He himself to all outward seeming was Etheldreda Satterfield's young man. It was inevitable that Bill should have drifted eventually to the side of such an alluring consoler. And how did

she feel towards the joyous, successful young man from the West?

His head came up abruptly. He spoke perfectly coolly, perfectly quietly while tumult raged within him. It is not comforting to realize that you are more in love with a girl than ever, no matter what she may do, and then see her being doubly lost.

" That would seem to take care of the matter. We'll see you two some time this evening, I suppose? "

But they didn't. Late that night Quarrendar sought the release of slumber from the memories of a trying succession of hours with Etheldreda Satterfield. Her conversation had been wild, her behavior worse. She need not have kept shouting " Romeo my darling! " at him across the table in that tea garden filled with interested strangers. She need not have violently insisted on sitting in the car in front of the Barque Haven Arms until midnight with a borrowed ukulele. He had wanted to think of someone else who was his radiant foe, and he hadn't been allowed to think of anything.

" Well," he murmured just before sleep claimed him, " there's not much more can happen now. Jane, Jane, Jane—I wish I had never met you."

He was awakened by an excited rapping at the door to find that long since the sun of another day had been high in its career. It was almost noon, which was sufficient proof of how weary a certain young hotel proprietor had been on retiring. Yawning he stepped over to the door and opened it upon a pale-faced, agitated bellboy.

"Out with it, son. What do you want?"

"It's Mr. Barnes, sir."

"What about him?"

"He wasn't in for dinner last night. His room hasn't been used. Mr. Arnold told me to tell you ——"

"Say it slowly," smiled Quarrendar still a little drowsy, "say it slowly and without unseemly quavers."

"Mr. Barnes has disappeared!"

"And that," said Stephen Quarrendar some minutes later, "has every mark of being the work of Mary Jane Devens Smith. A long and fond farewell to Romance Number Two."

[XI]

THE roofs and houses of Barque Haven, half-buried amid the trees, lay far behind them, not much more now than a drowsy town in miniature. Even the clear white bulk of the Barque Haven Arms had dwindled into a shining patch of its own against the stretch of sand and green that was the shoreline. Out here where a spanking breeze blew and good canvas strained and filled a separate world existed, one of sweeping sea and long horizons, of salt-keen air and stirring motion. Quarrendar gave the wheel a turn, his eyes aloft, and the sailboat rose like a racehorse to a sudden swell.

"Like it, Jane?" he called to his young lady passenger.

She was not wearing any hat this afternoon and the

wind was curling tiny tendrils of her hair about a flushed and sparkling face. Her eyes were shining. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith seemed a sailor born. For gorgeous hours they had been voyaging together in a domain of their own, the past forgotten and the future left to take care of itself. He had come upon her standing on the dock where a dozen or more trim craft were moored and he had thought she looked in a sailing mood. Wherein Stephen Quarrendar had been entirely correct.

"Out there," his hand had gestured to the broad Atlantic, "there is plenty of sea. And here are plenty of galleys, one of which happens to be mine for the season. Shall we be Vikings or shall we not?"

"I am free for the afternoon," she remarked. "And I have never been a Viking."

So that had been that. She had relented and it was enough. It was the first time he had been able to persuade the Barque Haven representative of Jane and Georgette to go sailing with him in all the weeks of their acquaintance and something like a sense of triumph was his. That astounding scene in which she had attempted to deliver him to Etheldreda Satterfield appeared to have drifted into the regions of oblivion. The hatchet had been buried and here he was with Mary Jane Devens Smith. She was his for at least a whole afternoon. It was nothing to him that a trace of sultriness hung in the air; there was none of it in his mood.

He gave the wheel another spin just as a cloud of

spray came sheeting in over the bow. The girl laughed and shook her head, casting off the silvery mist that clung in diamond drops to her tresses.

"A little blowy now and then, Jane. But you need never fear while the hand of a Quarrendar is on the helm. It comes natural to me. I had an ancestor once who bought stock in a fleet of ferry-boats. That's why we all love the water."

"Was it your Great-uncle Homer?"

"Great-uncle Homer supported an entire family of goldfish in a glass tank in the library. He too had felt the call of the deep and the divers and sundry marvels that swim in it. He had his housekeeper feed them regularly and, I believe, left them money in his will. Occasionally he used to sail to Europe too on the bounding main, that being the only way I know of to get there if one is desirous of comfort and regular meals. But he took a trans-Atlantic steamer and not a ferry-boat."

Cheerfully he grinned at her. In another moment or so he would seriously consider lashing the wheel and going over and sitting down beside her. But the sea was a trifle jumpy, the wind leaped along in confusing style without much attention to order. The weather ought to be a secondary consideration when Mary Jane Devens Smith was on board.

She was regarding the tip of a very fetching small shoe with a puzzling air of reflection.

"What are you thinking about, Jane?"

She gave him a quick, frank glance.

"I am wondering. That's allowable."

"If you wonder about the proper thing. Are you wondering what time I shall bring you back for dinner?"

"No-o," she said demurely.

"Or why it would not be an excellent idea for us to keep on adventuring like this between sea and sky forever?"

"Not quite."

"Or why I never guessed that a girl like you existed before?"

This remark, however, Quarrendar delivered to himself, and hastened into another as fast as possible.

"I also am wondering. About ——"

"The hotel?"

"Let's not call it exactly that. Rather about a guest who has been mysteriously missing for the last three days."

"And you think"—the small face was alight—"you think I ought to know anything about it?"

"I most certainly do. His disappearance is distinctly to your advantage and not at all to mine. I am not just having a lot of low suspicions. I'm pretty close to a certainty. Where is Mr. Barnes?"

"If you really want to know," said Mary Jane Devens Smith calmly, "he is safely home in Binghamton. I hired a car to take him to the junction for the night express and I saw him off in it myself from the village. I thought he was going to burst into tears out of sheer gratitude."

"So you practically kidnapped him in order to ruin Romance Number Two?" demanded Quarrendar with some heat. "I might have known you'd be up to something like that."

"I told him what to do when he was looking as though he'd lost his last friend on earth. And I personally superintended him while he did it. That's all, Stephen. Are you going to send his trunks and things to him?"

"The ticket agent at the junction swore to me over the telephone that no gentleman with a tangled moustache and an air of awful despair had purchased a passage for any destination whatever," said Quarrendar. "I called up the station the first thing." But then Mr. Barnes would not hesitate to stoop to bribery to cover the trail in his precipitate flight. "I suppose you win, Jane, and that's all there is to it."

"I always will." She brought her dainty head high. "And it doesn't seem that Adrienne is so upset about it."

The ravishing Mrs. Chalmers, as a matter of fact, had received the news of the disappearance with her customary poise.

"Cyrus is just being the *littlest* bit shy," she trilled. "It's so *typical* of him. Aren't men provoking?"

Romance Number Two had evaporated, Quarrendar was forced to confess to himself, looking at the distracting loveliness of the young lady who had brought about its finish. In three days you could get quite a distance from the Cape if you travelled fast and with-

out a break. Maybe Mr. Barnes would be heard from next in San Francisco. The Quarrendar smile, however, was showing evidence of coming back to normal.

"It is not polite," observed Jane, "for a host to mutter and mumble to himself. What are you talking about?"

"Adrienne and Mr. Barnes and the struggle between us for a great hotel. And the way in particular that you look when you let the wind have its own way with your hair."

This time he had said it out loud. He couldn't prevent himself. She was perfection—glowing, picturesque perfection, with one shapely arm flung along the rail and her slim feet braced to the roll of the waves.

"Do you know, Jane, what I really think about you?"

She looked up quickly, but her glance was not for him. It was directed to the horizon in his rear.

"I don't know anything about sailing. But I'm afraid you'll have to attend to the boat a bit more. Have a look at that sky, Stephen."

It was just like her to make the remark in a voice of complete coolness. When he turned to her again after a swift, searching survey of the expanse of sea behind him he also spoke tranquilly but the tone was more or less assumed.

"Right you are, and thanks for the tip. Next time you'll know better than to go sailing with a young man who gets so interested in other things that he forgets

to pay attention to the weather. Here's where we head for home as fast as canvas will take us."

The bow of the sailboat veered off as Quarrendar gave a turn to the wheel and angled away on the new course.

"Ever been out in a blow at sea, Jane?"

"Once," she smiled, "I became very wet in a canoe on a lake."

"You'll be wetter than that pretty soon." He delivered the information brightly but there was a line between his eyebrows. "So will I. And, of course, being a real son of the ocean I have forgotten the oilskins."

He did not have to throw a second glance over his shoulder to tell him what was there. Gray, menacing clouds had piled up out of nowhere, it seemed; gray clouds that were growing blacker by the moment. One of the Cape's sudden storms was coming at them both without warning. Or if it had delivered any warning he had been too engrossed with Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith to notice it. It was beginning to look as though Quarrendar was not such a splendid sea-dog, after all.

"Light your cigarette now and enjoy it," he called cheerfully to her. "Pretty soon everything on the premises is going to be good and damp. The kitchen of the Barque Haven Arms is a splendid place for drying out clothes."

"It's getting darker. But I'll take a match if you have one."

As casually as though she were riding in a motor

down Fifth Avenue in the sunshine of a summer day she settled herself on her pitching seat and prepared to wait and see what would happen. Quarrendar knew that they were never going to make the harbor of Barque Haven. They were due to be caught in the open, desperately striving to ride out the gale. He did not, however, intend to inform a certain radiant young lady of that fact.

"You're not making for Barque Haven," she said presently.

He swung one hand to the front where a low eminence of sand-cliffs and scraggly trees, a bare half-mile in length, shouldered out of the darkening ocean. It was still, to his landsman's eye, a long, long distance away and it seemed to be receding every moment.

"We're running for Little Petrel Island," he said shortly. "You can call it the first leg of the trip if you like."

Often from the veranda of the Barque Haven Arms he had looked out to the dismal, barren profile of Little Petrel Island, regarding it as a blotch on the otherwise perfect landscape and satisfied that it lay so far out to sea. Now he was thankful that it was here, close enough to win to if all went well and the storm did not rush down with too shattering force for a small sailboat. Already the first running patter of the rain was on them, the long swell had commenced. Their frail craft shuddered and leaped forward, straining.

"Now we get it," he shouted above what seemed an endless roaring.

"I think we do," she called back. What else it was that she said was lost forever.

Quarrendar never did distinctly recall the next half-hour of his career. He began to believe that he had been for years at the wheel of a leaping, plunging sailboat that hovered on the crests of waves only to charge blindly down into the heaving hollows they left behind. The clamor of the wind, the wall of gray, battering rain must have been with him since time began. Water was breaking into the cockpit in spurts and dashes and already ran ankle-deep. If the planks of their boat held it would be something to wonder at. His eyes strained forward into the murk, seeing through the shredding of gale-driven mist a bleak beach and watery dunes.

"Any rocks ahead?" He raised his voice to the top of its pitch to send the words to the girl. She was on her feet, clinging to the edge of the cockpit, drenched but undefeated in a whirling tumult. The boat buried its nose in a wave and took aboard a green-gray load of sea. It rose sluggishly, laboring as another roller came from behind.

"All clear, Stephen. And only about a hundred yards to go."

"Get ready to jump when she hits," he yelled. "I'm going to drive her bang onto the beach."

But would their heaving craft ever make that last hundred yards? One more mass of water flooding over bow or gunwales and it would go down like a plummet. It was hardly even answering to the rudder—wallow-

ing, turning from side to side, threatening to broach to in the trough of the waves which would spell finis. Quarrendar's arms were numb from the battle at the wheel to keep the course straight. He swept the water from his eyes with one hand. Almost overhead loomed the dunes with a shallow line of foam racing up to their base. He stood up.

"Ready, Jane?"

Her voice rang clearly.

"Ready, Stephen."

The next instant they had struck the beach. At the impact Quarrendar had leaped forward and swept the girl onto the bow beside the mast. Together they landed on good terra firma where the water, boiling with sand and pebbles, swirled to their knees.

"We have arrived," announced Quarrendar, "at our destination."

He could hardly believe it yet. He wanted somehow to let out a shout of jubilation. Instead he grinned at Mary Jane Devens Smith, her summery dress a drenched ruin, her stockings torn.

"And thank you," she called, "for the ride."

That was all. There was no reference between them to the blowing mass of rain, the pounding combers through which they had battled to land in a struggle whose outcome had been doubtful from the moment the first squall struck.

"Up the dunes and we'll have a look around." From the crest of the bank he reached down a hand and drew her, dripping, to his side. Only a melancholy,

water-swept waste of rough sea-grass and stunted trees met their eyes.

"There's a knoll over there. We might make for it and have a survey of our new home. Uninterrupted view of the ocean, hot and cold running rain, boat service every other year. Jane, you look like a wreck."

"You're no fashion plate yourself," she returned mockingly. "You seem to have lost your necktie, torn your shirt and your stockings are down over your shoes. No one would speak to you if they saw you on the street."

It was Quarrendar who uttered the first shout as they topped the knoll. Not fifty yards away, in the wilderness of rain and sand, squatted a moldering cabin. It had what appeared to be a fragment of a chimney and it certainly possessed four walls and a roof.

"It's a palace," he whooped. "I see some glass in its windows. It has a door and probably a floor. I'll bet it has a telephone and a garage. Come ahead, Jane, here's where we take possession. It hasn't been lived in since the year one."

Two of the boards of the ancient porch broke under their eager steps but that counted for nothing. In a moment more Stephen Quarrendar and Mary Jane Devens Smith were gazing at each other in a dusty, litter-filled room. The rain hammering on the roof had a distant, almost pleasant sound. Only one corner leaked and missing panes in the windows had been stuffed with newspapers.

"As I have remarked before this is my idea of a

mansion. I note a rough but homelike fireplace and plenty of loose wood about. When that gives out we can burn the door and after that the roof. But our matches appear to be a total loss."

" In the can on the table," she said in the most housewifely manner. " Plenty of them."

Handfuls of matches spilled out on the badly-whittled boards. An assortment of bags and tins on clumsy shelves greeted Quarrendar's gaze as he made a light in the gathering gloom.

" Jane, I take pride on being a model provider. I've brought you to the only deserted fisherman's cabin on the Cape that has food and heat in it. We will ask no questions concerning what valiant toiler of the sea is using this spot for a base. We shall simply be warmed and fed and leave behind a damp but welcome banknote on our departure."

Cheerful flames roared up the hearth a few moments later and Quarrendar drew up a bench before it. Outside the storm still blew mightily but within was shelter and peace. Slowly their dripping garments approached a normal if wrinkled dryness. The girl was fluffing out her hair with a delightfully domestic touch, her eyes smiling in the firelight.

" It's about time, isn't it, that I thanked you for rescuing me from the deep? You seem to be saving everybody you meet this summer."

" I sat at the wheel of a bounding boat while we both got wet," grinned Quarrendar. " That was about all there was to the performance. Only most of the

time I'll confess I didn't think we were going to get to shore."

"Neither did I. And I didn't want to be turned into a mermaid in the least."

So she had known, all the time, the thoughts that had been in his mind. She had faced the storm with an easy, quiet courage that made his battle to bring them out of it a small and inconsequential thing.

"Jane," he said in a low voice which he hoped was steady. The name was music. "Jane, I want to ——"

She was on her feet, dancing to the far corner of the room.

"You can lay the table, Stephen, if there's anything to lay it with. I'm exploring the cupboard. Do you know what time it is?"

"I don't know and I don't care! I only know that ——"

"It's almost seven o'clock. And I'm famished if you're not."

He was sure that whatever Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith spirited forth for their delectation from the shelves would make a marvelous banquet for a pair of stranded wayfarers. It was. Flushed from the glow of the fire she was producing what appeared to be a four-course dinner out of various tins. The stumps of a pair of candles flickered mellowly on the table, sending little, delicate lights and shadows over her face.

He wanted to see her successful in her business. He wanted to see her owning limousines and yachts through her own unaided efforts. He wanted to see

her established in a huge country place of her own. He did not. He wanted to see her as he was seeing her now, tripping brightly about a small apartment somewhere in town with that particular smile of hers on her piquant face—waiting for him to return home. He wanted Mary Jane Devens Smith to cook for him, to do anything else she desired for him, so long as it should be for life.

They were back on the bench now before the fire, contented and in perfect comradeship.

"Jane," he said tensely.

She moved a little so that he caught the full glory of her eyes, dreaming in the firelight.

"We're just a couple of castaways at present."

"On a very nice island, Stephen. I don't suppose we'll ever get off it."

"They'll come for us to-morrow when the storm has blown over. The first boat that goes out of Barque Haven will see our wreck on the shore and sail right up to investigate. Don't worry, they'll be combing the length of the Cape as soon as they find out we didn't get in from the rain. But to-night it's just we two on an island that might as well be out in the middle of the Atlantic."

"It's thrilling! It's a real adventure!"

"It's more than that, Jane." He had forgotten—ages ago it seemed—that this girl and he were adversaries, that to marry her would cost him the glittering prize of Great-uncle Homer's hotel, that she mocked and flouted him day in and day out. It was no use to

try to thrust aside the blazing certainty that had long been his. Here in the dusky cabin it could not be kept down another instant. Life without her would be a dreary stretch of existence devoid of color or purpose. Life with her would be a glowing, tremendous and wonderful adventure. Every happening for hours —the picture of her, debonair and loyal, in the storm, their low, intimate talk beside a hearth that might be their very own, her gay and untrammelled camaraderie—these had brought him to a resistless climax. He had his chance now to sweep aside all barriers with eager words and take her slim form in his arms.

"Something has happened. I think you must know what it is. You're different to-night, Jane, you're ——"

He paused. Something in him pounded and throbbed.

"Jane," he said. Nothing more.

Slowly he became conscious that her slender strength was pushing him back, that she was releasing herself from his clasp; that her lips had left his, left them as soon as they had met although that meeting still flamed. He found himself open-armed and empty of speech. That marvelous adventure had been so close and now it was drifting from him inexorably.

"You mustn't, Stephen, you mustn't!"

Again his hands went out and dropped down, baffled. He could see only the smile that beckoned to him, the softness in the shadowed eyes and his ears could catch only the lilt of laughter out of past days.

"Jane," he said to loveliness that the firelight made almost ethereal, "you know I love you."

"I don't intend to marry you," flashed the girl. "I haven't the least intention of marrying you," she added for emphasis.

"But why—why—Jane, what's wrong?"

His whole world was crashing about his ears in the dusk of a deserted cabin.

"Everything. And you know what that means, Stephen."

"I see," he said slowly. The flaming moment had passed and the chill of reality was enveloping him. He felt numb all over. "I ought to have remembered, but I didn't, that if you win the hotel and marry me the hotel goes to the Quarrendar Foundation. You came up to Barque Haven to win it for Mary Smith ——"

A small nod answered him.

—" and you don't intend to lose it by any such act. In addition to which I imagine that I must represent to you merely a summer acquaintance, an easy-going sort of person with whom to while away an occasional hour. That is, if you don't actually hate me, as you probably do, for being your opponent in the hotel affair."

He did not have to tell himself that all along he had been more or less hoping against hope that some way out of this maze of conflict and cross-purposes would be revealed. But there was none nor could there be any.

"Jane," he began again. She raised her hand.

"We have the whole night ahead of us," she said evenly. "We can't spend it quarrelling. We'll just forget everything you've said and begin all over again where we were."

"That leaves us sworn enemies, Jane. It makes us ——"

"And as I've said before you really don't know anything about me."

"I know all I want to. You're adorable, you're divine, you're ——"

The violet eyes which had been gazing about the room came back to his.

"Don't move for a minute. There's a man's face looking in the window directly behind you."

[XII]

HE stiffened. Here was action of some definite kind, something he could do to ease the tension of the last minutes.

" I can only see his eyes under his hatbrim. His coat collar is turned up too."

Quarrendar put a hand on the bench, ready for swift motion. Who could this intruder be who muffled himself in his garments and crouched beside the window peering in upon them? Not the owner of the cabin; he would have boldly entered his own premises.

" He's gone! "

At the words Quarrendar had jumped for the crazy door, flung it open and projected himself with a bound into a night of clear stars. The storm had blown itself

out and the air was clean and fragrant with the smell of salt. He had no idea what or whom he was about to face as he raced around the corner of the cabin. His one impulse was to lay hands on this prowler in the darkness, whose dim figure he made out huddled below the window.

He gripped a pair of bony shoulders and whirled the intruder upright.

"Just what are you doing hiding out here and looking in? Who are you anyhow?"

"Qwaw—Qwaw——" gasped a strangled voice. "Quarrendar! Lemme go! Lemme go!"

A shout of laughter rang over the dunes. In his clutch Quarrendar held the unresisting form of Mr. Cyrus Barnes, the missing guest of the Barque Haven Arms.

"So here is where we find you, is it, Mr. Barnes? And I thought you were at home in Binghamton by now taking a rest cure. Come in out of the dark. Three is company for us to-night."

Undoubtedly it was. There was no longer the glamour of high adventure in the firelit cabin. Diversion of any kind would be welcome to keep a young man from his own thoughts.

"Look well upon our visitor," announced Quarrendar to the girl. "Remember that you were the person who sent me out to see who it was. I think Mr. Barnes owes you an explanation for his unexpected presence on this desert isle when you put him in a motor for home."

Mr. Barnes struck his shin against the bench and groaned.

"She'd have followed me to Binghamton if I'd gone there. I know that Mrs. Chalmers. So I got to thinking and asked the native who was driving the car if he knew of a quiet place roundabout where I could hide. Nobody ever thinks of looking for you if you're right under their hand. He told me his brother owned this shack and we came out here in a motorboat. Why didn't you give up the search for me?"

"There never was any, Mr. Barnes," Quarrendar assured him cheerfully. "We all figured you'd turn up some time."

"I left a hat and coat on a rock by the sea. Hoped you'd think I'd jumped in. Then that blonde vampire would have left the place and I could have come back. Cost me twenty-five dollars to get out here where I could be by myself till you'd had the funeral."

"So it's you we're indebted to for our fire and an excellent dinner? We both certainly want to thank you, Mr. Barnes. I don't know what we'd have done without you."

"Saw you two coming over the dunes and jumped out the window," continued the lament. "Couldn't tell who you were. Might have been that Mrs. Chalmers and some other man. Hid in the potato cellar under the house till a few minutes ago. Cold as a grave." He quivered at the recollection. "Began to feel like a potato myself. So I had to get out. And what do I find?"

He worried at his moustache until it became a horrible wreck.

"Just my luck. You come here and eat everything."

"The Barque Haven Arms continues to pride itself on the merits of its cuisine," smiled Quarrendar. "Leon is a chef second to none as you are doubtless aware. Your old room is waiting for you, Mr. Barnes."

"It's fate," moaned the dismal Cyrus. "That's what it is. If I hid in a haystack in the middle of Ohio somebody'd come along and poke me out."

He gesticulated wildly towards the night outside. "There's another shack over there. Back of the next dune. I won't sleep in the potato cellar. Urgh!"

With wavering footsteps he tottered from sight, headed for safety and leaving behind him a trail of disjointed mutterings. It was only a few minutes later that Stephen Quarrendar stood in the doorway, a soft hand in his.

"You'll be all right here till morning," he said quietly. "If you want anything just let out a shout and I shall come bounding over the sands."

She laughed lightly, every note a torture to him.

"I shan't worry about anything. The castaways will be rescued with the dawn. It's been quite a day, hasn't it?"

It had. He swung abruptly from the porch.

"Good night, Jane."

"Good night—Stephen."

The last he saw of her was an alluring figure framed in the doorway, behind her the embers of the fire

smouldering golden-red in a final gallant effort before they sank into ashes. His hopes had flared like that, blazing for an instant but now overwhelmed by the dark. He didn't have much to look forward to any longer, it seemed. The night wind playing on his face as he strode along brought no life-giving tang with it. The stars were cold flickers of steely light overhead and the sea-grass which brushed against his legs made him stumble more than once before he reached the shack that held the fugitive Mr. Barnes.

"Don't talk. Don't say anything," muttered a funereal voice from the corner where someone was huddled under a pile of old sacks. "I want to die."

Quarrendar found a pair of rickety chairs and settled himself in them for uneasy repose. Mary Jane Devens Smith at least would be comfortable. There was a makeshift bed and blankets in the cabin he had just left.

"What do I care?" he told himself. "I won't sleep anyhow. So this is what all the Quarrendar dreams of a glorious summer by the sea have come to. I'm in love with the most delightful and maddening person in the world. There's no doubt about that. And to prove it I am going to give her Great-uncle Homer's hotel."

With complete calm Stephen Quarrendar was staring in the face the array of facts which had just been marshalled before him. No man could take away from the girl he was in love with a prize like a $250,000 summer caravansary. This was no gesture of fanatical

chivalry, of heroic self-sacrifice, or of magnificent forgiveness for all the trouble she had caused him. It was a case of plain common sense. The Barque Haven Arms in his possession would be a hollow shell, echoing with the taunt that he had won it from a slim, violet-eyed person whose rights in it were equal to his and whose courageous defense he had battered down by force.

" She's fought me against all odds," he murmured. " She'll go on fighting to the end. Mary Jane Devens Smith, you shall have your Barque Haven Arms. Because I'm in love with you and nobody else, it's going to be yours. I'd feel a rotter to my bones if I grabbed it away from you now."

He could vision her poised proudly between the tall white pillars of the rambling, green-roofed place that should be her home. He himself didn't fit any longer in the picture. A single scene between them, when the full realization of what she meant to him had dawned, attended to that. When the girl you loved was striving for a big stake you helped her all you could, you didn't hold her off and snatch it for yourself.

Both logic and sentiment said so.

" So here ends the battle of the Barque Haven Arms. And now—strange but true—it becomes my job to break up all the romances I've tried to start, including those already made. That goes for Mr. Barnes yonder and Adrienne. I'm backtracking on my own trail and playing Jane's own game for her but she'll never know

it. I haven't any idea what she'd do if she ever found out."

In all probability violet eyes would be alight and determinedly angry. Mary Jane Devens Smith was a person who preferred to fight her own campaigns for herself.

"Shut up," emerged a stifled gurgle in the gloom. "Can't stand people who talk to themselves. Means you're going crazy. I wish I was. When you're crazy you don't know what's happening to you."

Silence fell in the hut, profound and grateful. Presently Quarrendar's head dropped and his thoughts drifted into the vague, hazy whirl of consciousness that spells the borderland of slumber. Through it all one face, serene and courageous, shone in absolute loveliness.

Great-uncle Homer. . . . Good-bye to the Barque Haven Arms. . . . Jane . . . Jane . . . Jane . . .

He woke with a start, the sunshine of another day flooding in golden shafts upon the floor. Of Mr. Barnes there was no sign. That particular optimist apparently had ventured forth already. Slowly and a trifle stiffly Quarrendar removed himself from his chairs and wandered out towards the dune that overlooked the island. He sent exactly one glance at the mainland from its summit and then moved down to the cabin.

"Lazy," called the girl blithely from the door. She had a coffee pot in one hand and its bracing aroma already was distinct on the morning air. "We've been

up for hours and hours. And this is all you'll get for breakfast. There isn't anything else."

"You've done your last housework on our desert island," grinned Quarrendar. "The first thing I saw from the dune over there was a motorboat headed straight for us. They'll be here in about twenty minutes." He thrust out his cup. "More, Jane, more. While I still have you here I intend to see that you make yourself useful as well as decorative."

Not by word or sign did he intend to show her this morning that Stephen Quarrendar's spirits had not returned to normal. He frankly didn't know when they ever would. In the meantime he could at least find Mr. Barnes and put into action the plan which he had formulated for rescuing him from matrimony with the bewitching Adrienne. It would be a new and odd sensation to be tearing down his own handiwork. He came upon the moody one back of the cabin, peering into a rainbarrel with an expression of the deepest misanthropy on his features.

"Trying to shave myself next to this thing," he croaked. "What happened? Razor fell in. Gone forever."

"Recover from your calamity," urged Quarrendar brightly. "Your unexpected guests in no time at all will be back at the Barque Haven Arms. The rescue party is on the way. We're saved."

"I'm not." Mr. Barnes' haggard eye swept the dunes in despair. "I'd rather go to prison for ten years. Ten years isn't life."

"You're staying here," he was informed. "Neither Jane nor I will say a word about finding you. I'll get hold of that native of yours with the motorboat and bring you off as soon as the coast is clear. We'll land you down the Cape somewhere and you can take a train for Binghamton, Boston or Butte, Montana, whichever you prefer. How about two nights from now? I want to be absolutely certain things are safe."

"No use," husked Mr. Barnes. "Rheumatism. From that damned rain last night. Have to put my feet in a mustard bath or I'll never get well. Don't dare stay on this island another hour. I'd only starve to death. You two ate up all my supplies. I'm hollow now. I guess I quit."

It was obvious that the terrors of rheumatism and lack of nourishment on an uninhabited body of land surrounded by the Atlantic far outweighed the risks of the married state in the mind of Mr. Barnes. He at least had never experienced the latter. Quarrendar shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll find some other way of helping you out of your troubles. You can leave it to me to do all I can."

"You're a gentleman," gurgled the melancholy Cyrus. "You're a prince among men. T-three husbands! She married the last one as near as I can make out the day she met him and then she goes and divorces him at White's Ferry ——"

"Where?" demanded Quarrendar.

"White's Ferry. It's in New York, or Connecticut or Rhode Island. There's some judge there who hands

out divorces like diplomas at a high school commencement."

White's Ferry—White's Ferry. Try as he would Quarrendar could not summon up the recollection which the name brought to his mind. It hung, aggravatingly, in his memory just out of reach, vanished as soon as it had arisen. White's Ferry? Divorce? It had nothing to do with his stay in Barque Haven.

A warning call from Mary Jane Devens Smith was sounding from the porch of the cabin. She was all ready, it seemed, for the trip home and Mr. Barnes, grimacing violently, staggered along with them on the way to the beach. It was futile, his attitude of utter dejection declared, to struggle any longer against the workings of destiny. Shouts greeted their appearance from the occupants of a gleaming motorboat which had come to rest some twenty-five yards offshore. Familiar figures were calling and waving to them with the height of enthusiasm.

"Our faithful friend Bill Weedon appears to be leading the relief in person," announced Quarrendar. "I note also the charming Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers, perhaps in the guise of a volunteer worker, and ——"

There was no need to add that Etheldreda Satterfield was present. He was far from being free as yet of that particular menace. Her immediate and prolonged tumult sounded over the water.

"What the darnation, darling! We thought you'd gone down to Whoozit's locker. I was all ready to pick out my mourning."

" Fishing boat came in about dawn and reported a sailboat on the beach out here," roared Bill Weedon. " This baby says: ' That's Steve, all right. He's got sense enough to get in out of the rain.' So here we are. I've been up all night calling every blasted port on the Cape to see if you'd blown in anywhere. We were ready to drag the Atlantic for the bodies. Come aboard the ark! "

Already Mr. Barnes was lurching through the shallow water to the motorboat. His eyes appeared to be fast closed and he splashed feebly.

" O-oh, Cyrus," Adrienne was saying. " How simply *wonderful* to find you here! *Everybody* has missed you so."

" Came out for a rest," he gurgled. " Didn't get it. I hate islands."

" So *that's* why you left us all wondering about you? *Poor* Cyrus, you look *all* worn out."

The moody one quivered and sat down in the stern of the boat, as far from Adrienne as possible.

" That's all the reason you'll ever get from me," he muttered, and relapsed into hopeless silence.

" Coming, Jane? " There was only one way to cover the distance between the shore and the rescuing craft which had approached as closely as it could. Before she could say a word he had swept her up in his grasp and was stepping out briskly through the water. He felt a pair of smooth arms about his neck and a fragrant tress of Jane's hair brushed against his cheek. The violet eyes were looking into his; the brown-dusky head

was practically on his shoulder. It was nothing to him that an entire boatload of guests from the Barque Haven Arms, including Miss Etheldreda Satterfield, were watching.

"This," he murmured with his lips almost touching her ear, "is what I've always wanted to do with you. Pick you up and carry you away forever."

"Really?" The whispered answer was gay, thrilling.

A strength that he had never known before seemed to run through his deepest fibres. Never while any girl dared to look like that would he give up the battle for her. The slim form seemed as light as a feather as he lifted her over the gunwales and set her on her feet.

Mary Jane Devens Smith brushed the hair from her forehead and smiled at him. It was a smile he could never forget.

"Thank you—Stephen," she said. "For lots of things."

He was still pondering that smile as the motorboat arrowed across the sunlit water towards the home dock, a clean curtain of spray shooting out from the bow. Vaguely he heard the honeyed tones of Adrienne, the chatter of Etheldreda proclaiming the discovery of another place where one could dine and dance.

"It's called the Old Mill. They've painted it red all over. It stays open all night."

White's Ferry—divorce—a mill. The one careless word of Etheldreda had unlocked the gates of mem-

ory. There had been a scandal about the divorces granted at White's Ferry. Mr. Ethan Hulbert had mentioned the fact that eventful morning in the office and it had remained stored in a cranny of his mind. He shot a glance at Mr. Barnes, huddled in the stern and another towards Adrienne. Maybe, maybe——

He would send a long telegram to Mr. Ethan Hulbert, that astute man of law, the moment the boat docked.

Someone else seemed to be in a hurry as their craft swung into the hotel pier. A bellboy was moving rapidly across the lawn with an envelope displayed in his hand.

"Cablegram for Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith," he announced. The girl opened it casually and Stephen Quarrendar would have given his soul to have had visited upon him the soft and joyous look that came into her eyes. The next instant the sheet had fluttered to the dock and he was retrieving it for her. It was no fault of his that his brain registered the full message which lay there, unavoidably bared to the first glance.

"Proposition went over big. Sailing shortly. We will be married as soon as it suits you.

PETER."

"I'm sorry," he blurted out. They were alone by the water's edge, the others having moved on. "I couldn't help seeing what it said. I might have guessed it all along. So that is the young man who was in your shop that day in New York?"

"Yes," she said softly. "That was Peter. He went to Europe on a big business proposition. Now it's over."

"And Peter is Peter who?" asked Quarrendar numbly.

"Van Dyckman, of course." The girl said it proudly as though the name should be instantly recognized. It was.

"I should have known that too from the first. I've seen his picture often enough," muttered Quarrendar. "Every time a Van Dyckman moves he gets his photograph in the papers. They've been in New York about three hundred years, haven't they? And they own five banks, three railroads and something like a mile and a half of Fifth Avenue, including four private castles on it?"

"Yes," said the girl again. "You're right. That's the family."

"And now Miss Mary Smith of Denver, Colorado, is to be raised to the American peerage?"

"If you want to put it that way."

He shouldn't have said what he did but Stephen Quarrendar was beyond orderly thought. He had been many times an innocent never to suspect that this radiant, cool young lady who was Mary Jane Devens Smith would have her hosts of admirers, and serious admirers, of whom he knew nothing. There was no reason why she shouldn't have been engaged all along. No wonder she had wanted the Barque Haven Arms so badly. It would be her dower.

"Jane," he said soberly, "I congratulate you. I mean it. You deserve the best there is."

Abruptly he left her and strode across the lawn, in front of him the homelike bulk of the Barque Haven Arms shining in the sunlight. It was magnificent and glittering.

"And I'll give it to you," he murmured, "for a wedding present. A promise is a promise. If I took it for myself after what happened last night it would be plain jealousy."

[XIII]

A RUMPLED thatch protruded from amid the covers of the bed where wild confusion prevailed. The pillow was slewed sideways and lay in dented misery against the baseboard; the foot that had kicked it there still rested upon it. The sheets were tumbled and wound in disorder about the figure that sprawled among them, emitting the frightful, jagged sounds of the sleeper who snores. One hand had won free of the linen wrappings and clutched in a death grip the end of a draggled moustache. It had been an uneasy night in Room 23.

Presently the noises ceased. The mummy in the bed stirred and began to battle against its wrappings. "Let go of me! For God's sake, let go of me!" it muttered.

Then the sheets gave way and the pajamaed figure burst forth as from a cocoon, sitting up and glaring about it.

It was Mr. Barnes' wedding day. He looked like something that had been cast up by the sea. With a terrible groan he ducked his head back under the covers and remained there for a quarter of an hour without moving. The reality to which he had awakened, it was quite evident, contained far more of distress than the dream to which he had been subjected during the hours of slumber.

"Nine o'clock," gurgled Mr. Barnes in the voice of a bachelor who has only a few hours to live. "Ten o'clock—eleven o'clock—twelve—one! Oh, my God!" Into the future beyond one o'clock when Mr. Cyrus Barnes and Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers would be standing hand in hand before the authority of the State of Massachusetts—object, matrimony—tottering reason refused to look. Mr. Barnes fell out of bed but failed to cripple himself, and began to dress. His trunks stood locked about the room, his travelling bag waited only for the last articles to be thrust into it.

A light knock sounded on the door. "Cyrus dear," cooed the voice he knew. "Remember we start soon. Don't be late, dearest." Her footsteps died away and Mr. Barnes who a moment before had shuddered began craftily to turn back the hands of his watch.

"What for?" he uttered disconsolately and ceased to disrupt his chronometer. "She'll come up and drag me out anyhow." Again the pall of silence fell upon

Room 23 and again it was broken by a knock. This was Stephen Quarrendar in the guise of best man who had arrived early to inquire concerning the mood of his principal.

"I saw you weren't in the dining room, Mr. Barnes. Can I have something sent up to you? Your slightest wish is our command to-day."

"No," glared the bridegroom-to-be. "Can't eat."

Mr. Barnes, who had been fumbling in his vest pocket for a cigar, brought out a fountain pen and essayed to bite the end off. "Go away," he wailed. "Go down to the village and find that native who sells the stuff. You know what I mean. They say one stiff drink of it will send a man singing to the electric chair."

"I don't think that's quite what you want," Quarrendar assured him. "You're up against a momentous question that comes to everybody, that's all. And you certainly have a fine day for it."

The melancholy Cyrus, to judge from all appearances, was doomed. Romance Number Two was going through without a hitch despite every eleventh-hour effort of Quarrendar to block it. The telegram to Mr. Ethan Hulbert, now a week in the past, had produced nothing except a silence that was its own explanation. It had been, after all, hardly more than wild clutching at a straw. He had aided, assisted and otherwise furthered this match and when he wanted to stop it he couldn't.

Mr. Barnes stumbled over to the windows and

pulled down the shades with such violence as to snap one of the cords. The sheer gold of Barque Haven's morning sunlight did not appear to fit in with his mood.

"I could tie a couple of sheets together and slide out the window," he suggested hoarsely. "Or you might borrow some of her clothes from the housekeeper for me and I could slip out the back door. You said you'd get me out of this."

Quarrendar spoke evenly.

"I've tried, Mr. Barnes. I've done all I could." At this rate Mary Jane Devens Smith would never win the Barque Haven Arms. He simply wouldn't be able to give it to her. "But I'm sure you'll feel a different man when it's all over. You're just having the natural tremors which accompany entrance into the state of matrimony."

It was consolation, even if of the smallest, to realize that the oncoming event would be the most salutary prescription possible for the gloom enveloping the moody one. Adrienne would make him a delightful mate.

"I'm a happy, happy man," arose the litany. "I'm a happy, happy man. Where are you taking my bags to?"

"Downstairs. The best man always plays the part of baggage smasher in addition to his other duties. Efficiency is the watchword of the Barque Haven Arms. Service with a smile, whether it's a welsh rabbit or a wedding."

"What's the difference?" Mr. Barnes inquired feebly. "They both give you nightmares."

In the foyer Quarrendar entrusted the luggage to a uniformed youth and approached the desk. He felt depressed for more than one reason. It was going to be no easy task, he realized, to break up the romances which already had been commenced with his help.

"Telephone, Mr. Quarrendar," the clerk informed him. "Long distance."

In a few steps he was in the booth. A capable masculine voice was travelling over the wire. It was brief and direct.

"Proprietor of the Barque Haven Arms? This is the city editor of the Lynn *Evening Blade* calling."

"And what is the idea?" inquired Quarrendar curtly. "I happen to be very busy this morning."

"You had a Mr. James F. Bedloe of this city and a Miss Edith Gray, his trained nurse, stopping with you earlier in the summer?"

"We did. And what about it?"

"We want the dates of their stay."

"I certainly can't give them to you offhand. And I don't see any reason why we should provide them to you."

"The old gentleman announced he was going to marry his nurse some weeks ago. Now he's changed his mind and she intends to sue him for breach of promise."

"For what?"

"Breach of promise. She seems to have a sure case

for damages. We want to tell in our story how long they were at the Barque Haven Arms."

"I'll have you switched to the desk clerk," said Quarrendar, his pulse bounding. Romance Number One was crashing in his very ears. "I'll tell him to give you all the information you need. And you can quote me, as proprietor of the hotel, to the effect that Mr. Bedloe while here gave every indication of a genuine and lasting affection for the plaintiff. That'll help her side, won't it?"

"It'll cinch it," came the reply. "She's got letters from him anyhow. Thanks for the dope."

Quarrendar hung up, smiling. The Barque Haven Arms already had slipped out of his possession. Something might yet turn up to damage the other two romances beyond recall and make assurance trebly sure. Mary Jane Devens Smith would go yet to a millionaire husband an heiress in her own right. There would be no tongues of scandal to murmur that she was a clever little fortune-hunter. He would cut his right arm off first. He happened to love her and it made no difference that she was engaged to another. He could not take away from her the shining hotel on which she had set her heart. To do so under the present circumstances would be an act of despicable and black betrayal.

Some time thereafter a touring car with Quarrendar in the driver's seat rolled out from the garage and took the road for the distant village by the junction where in the parlor of a native justice of the peace a certain

ceremony was to be performed. With a clear stretch ahead he loosened his hands a trifle on the wheel and let his gaze stray to the young lady beside him.

Etheldreda Satterfield was wearing her largest and floppiest hat and had done herself splendidly with lipstick and powder puff for the occasion. It was inevitable that Stephen Quarrendar had drawn her as a partner. She would probably have climbed in beside him anyhow.

"I can't leave as early as you do," Mary Jane Devens Smith had declared firmly. "We'll pick you up for luncheon over there." A twinge assailed him as he thought of Bill Weedon's huge and glittering roadster bearing such a cargo of radiance through the sunny morning. But he hadn't argued the question. Mary Jane Devens Smith knew her own mind on all subjects.

This was August in full sway and the charm of New England through which they were coursing with a lovely vision and a somewhat haggard gentleman sharing the rear cushions amid a full equipment of hand luggage. The big car purred contentedly and continued to glide over the miles between level pastures bordered by woodlands with here and there young orchards that ran up the slopes.

"It's been a good getaway so far," said Quarrendar briefly. "Early luncheon at the tea garden I've reserved for a little before twelve, ceremony not more than a few blocks away at one, train for New York at two. We'll be on schedule to the minute."

"I've brought two old shoes," proclaimed Ethel-

dreda. "It'll be a new thrill to sling one at a locomotive. Anyone want to bet I can't land the first shot in the Pullman?"

Slowing down Quarrendar found a cigarette and put it to his lips. It would be like Etheldreda to pick out the engineer for her target.

"Match, anybody?"

"Here's a light, Stephen," trilled a soft voice from behind him. "We've just lit ours." It was evident that they had. Between Adrienne's fingers was poised a dainty, gold-tipped affair and a stouter one was being puffed to jerky life under Mr. Barnes' moustache.

"Thanks," he saluted as Adrienne touched the flame to his. The future Mrs. Barnes had a decidedly attractive way about her of being attentive to men in the little things that count.

But the eyes of Mr. Barnes were frightful to behold. He goggled, he gasped, he groaned.

"Mrs. C-Chalmers," broke from him in accents of mortal terror.

"Adrienne, Cyrus dear, Adrienne. We're on our way to be married."

"Three cigarettes on one match! You did it. I saw you do it. Mine and yours and Quarrendar's. Awful!" He hid his face in his hands. "Let it come," he muttered. "I don't care what happens next."

"What is it they say?" demanded Etheldreda brightly. "When things run too darned smoothly before a wedding ——"

Her remark remained unfinished. The fair Adrienne

with the tact of a wife-to-be was endeavoring to distract Mr. Barnes' mind from its gloomy forebodings.

"Cyrus dear," she urged. "*Do* look at that farmhouse with the rail fence. Isn't it *too* picturesque? Think of having a *divine* home like that!"

Upon the weatherbeaten porch children played and in a chair by the steps a tranquil New England housewife rocked and sewed. It was a picture of rural peace.

"Don't want to look at farmhouses. Frightful places. They're always mortgaged."

It was, from present indications, quite useless to argue with him on his wedding morn. After a while Adrienne desisted and contented herself with nestling up to him. Mr. Barnes writhed slightly and closed his eyes in the manner of a criminal who winces at sight of the scaffold.

"For God's sake, Quarrendar," he husked, "hurry up! Let's get it over."

Quarrendar obliged and occupied himself with the business of the road ahead. The car topped a long rise with the grace of a greyhound and flew down the slope beyond and across a bridge that arched a brown and lazy stream, slumbering on its march to the sea. Very soon now they would be rolling sedately down a romantic old main street, bordered with cool white houses set back in yards. But he was not thinking of the years-old glamour of a little New England town. His thoughts, ever since leaving the hotel, had been on something else and they were answered within the next half mile. A vast sounding of horn came from behind,

a shape gleaming in aluminum and scarlet wheels shot up to and passed them and a hearty voice trumpeted: "What have you got there—Noah's barge?"

Through the trailing cloud of dust a young man's face showed a little tensely. He had had one flashing glimpse of the radiance of the earth, moon and stars contained in a slender person whose filmy scarf floated out behind as though flinging challenge to a hopeless pursuer. The race was always to the swift—and the successful. He added a burst of speed to the car. He wanted to be where he could look at Mary Jane Devens Smith, the fiancée of somebody else.

"Step on it, darling," encouraged Etheldreda. "Does that wild man from Walla Walla think he owns the road? Wait till I tell him what his dust has done to my brand-new complexion."

They lost the race, however, by some minutes and found the pride of Walla Walla beaming on the sidewalk before the hedge that shut off a tranquil little open-air tea court from the world. Beside him the girl, flushed and smiling, waited their coming.

"How about luncheon?" demanded Weedon immediately. "I've had my fresh air and exercise for the day. Or don't you feed 'em before you marry 'em? You look a little thin and pale to me, brother." Mr. Barnes, thus addressed, pried himself weakly out of the back of the car.

"Lit three cigarettes on one match on the way over," he croaked. "You know what that means. I don't have to tell you."

"I sure do. You've forgotten the ring or the license."

The melancholy Cyrus appeared optimistic for the first time that day and felt about in his pockets. "No," he lamented. "Got 'em both."

A party of six sat down shortly to the intimacy of a round table in an arbor where vines twined in rambling friendliness on all sides and overhead. Old silver gleamed on a spotless cloth and the diminutive waitress moved alertly in attending to their wants. Bill Weedon broke the peace and tranquillity with his accustomed briskness.

"Judge know we're coming with the accused, Steve?"

"I've notified his house that we've arrived. He'll be on time."

"What bothers me about this wedding," announced Etheldreda, "is that I don't know whether I'm supposed to represent the maid of honor or the weeping mother. I've got my last bridesmaid's hat on. Who has a coin? Heads I smile and tails I howl."

Quarrendar sincerely hoped that Miss Etheldreda Satterfield would remain quiet during the ceremony. Already she appeared to be approaching a dangerous stage which might culminate in the impression that after all she was supposed to personify a choir in song.

"The only thing you have to remember, brother," Weedon informed Mr. Barnes at this moment, "is to say 'I do' at the right time and keep on saying it till they tell you to stop. Got it down O. K.?"

"I do," repeated Mr. Barnes hollowly. "I do. I do. I do. No, I don't. No, I don't. I do. I do."

Vaguely Quarrendar heard the pride of Walla Walla continuing to uphold the honors of the conversation. He himself preferred to sit back in silence watching the swift color come and go in certain glowing cheeks opposite him, seeing the sunbeams sift down through the vines to nestle in her hair, listening to the eloquent catch in her voice whenever she spoke. Now and then violet eyes played over him, stirring him, and passed on. Words that he wanted to say to her stormed to his lips and died without sound but mercifully the others at the table were too much engrossed in their own exclamations to notice anything. She certainly was lost to him in every way possible. Luncheon without his aid was proceeding animatedly. Seldom had Adrienne appeared more charming than in her tailored travelling suit and smart, close-fitting hat. It had Jane and Georgette Shoppe written all over it.

"I thought I'd have dark blue for my going-away dress," she confided to the table. "When you're dressed in the deeper shades it makes you feel as though *everything* is going to be *so* permanent. When I went away with Heyward I had on the lightest, *flightiest* kind of a tan pongee. And I do *hate* to have *everybody* on the train looking at me on my wedding trips. I'm *sure* no one will suspect Cyrus and I are bride and groom."

No, thought Quarrendar, they wouldn't. The car would take them for a good-looking trained nurse and

a patient being escorted to the metropolis for a peculiarly painful operation.

"I do," intoned Mr. Barnes sepulchrally. "I do. I do. I do."

"The condemned man," suggested Weedon, cocking an eye at Mr. Barnes' untouched plate, "ate a hearty meal. I speak for the gold watch, in case you want to spread any of your effects around before you go."

Mr. Barnes made no answer. His moustache by now was a horrible ruin, torn and drooping beyond repair.

"Don't be nervous, Cyrus dear," comforted silvery tones. "I'll see that everything goes off *splendidly.* I know so *much* more about it than you."

"When I was a boy," groaned Mr. Barnes, his mind roving in the happy past, "all the girls in school used to make faces at me." He tweaked at his long nose and fell silent again.

It was Quarrendar who broke up the party at a signal from Adrienne. She was, it seemed, not one who cared for waiting at the church. Once more the two motors were in motion but this time even the aluminum juggernaut was proceeding decorously as they glided around the corner of a tree-girt square and came to rest in front of a house on a side street. There was an ancient brick wall running to the porch on one pillar of which was nailed a sign reading:

Joel P. Jones
Justice of the Peace

A stout middle-aged woman, beaming through spec-

tacles, admitted them after the second assault on the door bell. Quarrendar glanced around to make certain that the bridegroom was still present. Mr. Barnes, like a man in a daze, trailed into the house well in the rear of the procession.

"I do. I do," he informed the ceiling.

"Mrs. Jones?" opened Quarrendar briskly. "We're the wedding party from the Barque Haven Arms that Mr. Jones was expecting at one o'clock. I suppose he's all ready for us?"

"Well," was the answer with true New England caution, "my husband's been out in the barn for half an hour now selling a horse to Neighbor Haynes. They do take quite a time when they have a horse deal together. When Neighbor Haynes buys anything he has to get his mind all set to it."

"Oh, dear," sighed Adrienne. "I just *can't* bear to have things delayed at my wedding."

"I tell you what I'll do," said the lady of the house, after a full minute's pause. "I'll call him."

Her voice was heard raised on the back stoop directing a message towards the barn.

"Joel! Jo-el! Wedding's waiting, Joel!"

She returned more beaming than ever. "That got Joel," she explained carefully. "He's just down to the gate now, seeing Neighbor Haynes off. He won't be more than a minute."

It was, however, a full five minutes before Justice of the Peace Joel P. Jones joined the company. He blinked a bit out of inattentive blue eyes and his five

feet six of wiry Yankee stock was clad in an ancient, rusty black suit.

"Maria," he said, with a reflective tug at the bit of iron-gray fringe concealing his chin, "that feller Haynes has got to come up fifteen dollars or he don't buy hair nor hoof o' that horse. He's gone home to think it over."

"In the meantime," suggested Quarrendar, "couldn't we go ahead with the wedding? I'm anxious to have it start as soon as possible on account of there being a train to catch."

Justice Joel Jones considered the question while his disinterested gaze passed over the party which had invaded his business hours.

"I guess there ain't no reason we shouldn't," he conceded. "The parlor's the place they generally like to have it done in. Not that the kitchen ain't warmer in winter."

He led the way with no haste into a room of faded wallpaper and summer shadows, carefully moved a pair of haircloth-covered chairs and bared a space before the flat desk whose only decorations were a paperweight and a telephone. After which he fumbled around in a drawer and brought up an official-looking book.

"It don't generally take but about a minute," he remarked. "Most of 'em want to have it fast and that's agreeable to me."

He coughed officially and ruffled through the pages. Adrienne already had taken up her place before the

desk while the others had ranged themselves in a group a little behind. Bill Weedon's rubicund countenance was one large smile but no one could have told from Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith's serene expression what was going on in her mind. Etheldreda snapped her fingers once as her sign of encouragement and then fortunately stiffened into the conventional attitude.

"Cyrus dear," smiled Adrienne happily, "*do* come up and be married."

Mr. Barnes closed his eyes, opened them glassily, gulped twice and remained motionless. He stood by himself over near the wall and it was doubtful if he had even heard the words. With a final and far more solemn cough Justice Joel P. Jones looked up, his fingers marking the place in his volume. His eyes fell upon Quarrendar in solitary grandeur a step or so ahead of the rest.

The finger crooked.

"Come up here, young man."

Automatically he approached, feeling in his pocket for the ring which Mr. Barnes had transferred to him as best man. It was there, he found with a breath of relief. Weddings were always nervous affairs for all the parties concerned and it was as well to have them over as rapidly as possible. Justice Jones, who was now regarding him somewhat disapprovingly, had already expressed a similar view.

"Take her hand."

Here was something new to Quarrendar. He had hardly expected to give the bride away as well as per-

form the functions of bulwark for the bridegroom but, after all, this was a highly informal ceremony. He found a cool hand clasping his and shot a sidelong glance at Adrienne whose eyes were fixed contentedly on the wall behind the desk. All Quarrendar could see there was a singularly unencouraging painting of a brace of codfish.

"I do," came a hollow muttering. With his free hand Quarrendar made a swift gesture, summoning Mr. Cyrus Barnes to the front. Mr. Barnes stared at him wildly and lifted a foot but replaced it on the floor with the helplessness of one smitten by paralysis. Quarrendar was conscious that a series of rapid mumblings were emanating from Justice Joel Jones who had his gaze riveted on his book, evidently running through a fast rehearsal.

"Over here, quick," he sent at Mr. Barnes in a low, carrying voice. "You'll be late and miss your train."

"I do." It seemed to be all that the stricken Cyrus could utter.

The mumblings went on and Quarrendar began to draw his hand slowly from that of Adrienne. She turned as she felt his motion and her soulful eyes widened to their fullest and most bewitching extent.

"Oh, Stephen!" she whispered. "I never, *never* thought it would be *you!*"

And then realization struck in a single devastating, shattering flash. It was no rehearsal through which Justice Joel Jones was muttering his way. It was the ceremony itself. Stephen Quarrendar in a matter of

seconds more would have the wedding benediction pronounced over himself and Adrienne Chalmers.

His throat had gone dry. Not a word could he force through his lips. His brain was reeling, spinning, swirling in a maelstrom of amazement and shock. He was being married to Adrienne.

"S-stop!" he gasped.

The justice looked up rebukingly.

"Don't make noises, young man." But the droning had halted. The telephone on the desk was ringing—gloriously, marvelously. Justice Joel P. Jones cast an eye on it and put down his book in the middle of a sentence.

"Might be about that horse," he announced.

The instant's respite was enough. Quarrendar was at the side of Mr. Barnes, holding him by one arm, nor did he ever intend to let him go.

"You saw what happened?"

The justice at the desk looked displeased and put down the receiver.

"Who's Quarrendar?"

"I am."

"Somebody seems like they want you. I'll tell 'em to wait till we're through."

"You will not!" He leaped for the instrument, his brain racing. Explanations, recriminations from an outraged justice of the peace, clamor and complete reorganization of a wedding party were all due to take place in the dusky parlor inside of the next few minutes. This unexpected call, at least, would give him a

breathing space in which to prepare for what was to come.

"What's that, Mr. Arnold?" his voice was heard distinctly in a startled room. "Yes, of course, you knew you could locate us here. Telegram that was phoned up from the village? Important? All right" —his hand snatched an envelope and a pencil from his pockets—"I can take it down."

Perceiving himself unobserved Mr. Barnes commenced to edge stealthily towards the door. The third step, however, brought forth an ear-splitting squeak from a loose floor-board and he froze rigid. Quarrander was holding out the message to Adrienne Chalmers. He would never know now if in her charming, innocent way she would have let the mistaken ceremony go through or not.

"It's for you, Adrienne."

The bewitching Adrienne had the hand of Mr. Cyrus Barnes in hers. Perhaps she had almost been wedded to another but the original fiancé at present was completely back in the fold. It was even doubtful if Mr. Barnes had had any conscious idea of the import of the scene that had almost been enacted between the justice and Quarrendar and herself.

Justice Joel Jones was rapping impatiently on the desk with his knuckles while waiting for the lady to read her telegram. He had an important horse deal on.

"Oh," gasped Adrienne and dissolved into tears. "This is too, *too* terrible! Cyrus, I can't marry anybody!"

"Oh, my God!"

Soft sobs came from behind a bit of cambric. "It's from Paul, my third. There's been a terrible mix-up somewhere. Some New York lawyer has been looking into what they call a divorce-mill where I got my last one and has found out it isn't legal. Paul is simply furious."

So Mr. Ethan Hulbert, the astute attorney, had been heard from at last. He had taken Stephen Quarrendar's tip regarding a certain divorce at a place called White's Ferry and had wasted no idle moments in his investigations. He had notified the absent husband just in time. After all, that was what a good lawyer was for. Quarrendar had a shrewd suspicion that the charming Adrienne in the exultation of preparing for another wedding hadn't looked in her mail-box for some forty-eight hours.

Match Number Two, through his own strategy, had been declared off. It was just as well, also, from the point of view of the legal regulations which guard matrimony. It must have been an optical illusion but Quarrendar was willing to swear that he saw the draggled end of Mr. Barnes' moustache rise and curl in horrid ecstasy.

"What's that?" he croaked. "Say it again! Say it again!"

But the lovely vision had gone back to another burst of sobbing.

Into the hands of Mr. Barnes was thrust the fatal missive and as he read his whole frame trembled with

indescribable emotion. A dreadful gurgling sound was proceeding from him.

"Knew something was coming the minute we lit those three cigarettes from one match! Never had any luck in my life. Here I am all ready to get married and what happens? This hardwood-headed farmer" —he glared at Justice Joel P. Jones who indignantly glared back at him—" tries to marry you to Quarrendar before anybody knows what's up. What's next when that's stopped? Ghastly telegram that spoils it all. It's a rotten world! All alone at the altar. That's me.

"I guess I've got a Nemesis," he added with anguished conviction and actually put his hand on Adrienne's shaking shoulder. "Don't cry. Oh my God, don't cry! I hate crying. The sun's shining somewhere. Here's my handkerchief. Let go my hand."

Slim arms went about his neck and Adrienne wept unreservedly on her Cyrus's breast.

"I feel just like the p-piece of French pastry on the tray that nobody wants. Cyrus, tell me you love me!"

"Stop it, for God's sake, stop it," he besought wildly. "I c-can't stand people who cry. We'll go to Paris. You stay with my s-sister there. You get another divorce—a fireproof one. Then we'll get married. We'll travel. We'll go round the rotten world just to show it." Utter gloom pervaded him. "I'm sick of having things go wrong. I want peace and quiet."

"Oh, Cyrus," came muffled accents. "You're *so* brave and resourceful. But I can't *possibly* go until

spring if we're doing all that. There's a little place I'll have to sell at Palm Beach first and I can't *bear* to cross the Atlantic in winter. I'm not a wonderful, *strong* sailor like you."

"That's all right," he muttered gruffly. "Any time at all will do me. Take me six months anyhow to turn the business over to my partner. One year—two years —what's the difference so long as we get married in the end?"

Quarrendar breathed a happy sigh. Some day in the future the lovely Adrienne would be Mrs. Cyrus K. Barnes and it would be a benefit to both of them but it wasn't going to interfere with the disposition of the Barque Haven Arms. It would be a romance so far beyond the time limit that it would never count.

"There, there," Mr. Barnes was urging, continuing to pat her shoulder in a decidedly amateurish fashion and gulping a little as he did so. "Use my handkerchief all you want. Got plenty more in my bag. Put some powder on. I'll buy you a hat."

"You *dear,*" rippled Adrienne as her flushed face came into view. "I've *always* wanted to be married in a hat from Paquin's."

The telephone had commenced ringing again but no one paid any attention to it except Justice Joel Jones who shot a few crisp words into the mouthpiece and hung up. The scene of happiness restored was engaging all eyes. The justice spoke first, thrusting out his gray chin fringe towards Mr. Barnes in righteous indignation.

"If that's the feller who's the bridegroom I'll be sowed and reaped. Looks like the driver of a cracka-jack funeral to me. It don't bother me much now I picked the wrong one. I guess anybody else would of done it too. Anyhow, I just this minute sold my horse so the whole day ain't wasted."

They saw them off at the station, not on their honeymoon but none the less of good cheer. The tears of Adrienne had vanished like gentle dew beneath the morning sun and their little group looked upon a Cyrus Barnes emerged at last from more than four decades of chronic gloom.

"Cheated out of my wedding day," he muttered as he shook hands with Quarrendar on the platform. "Never knew I loved her till I lost her. Shan't put up with it for a minute. What's love? It's a burning lump of lead inside your chest. I'm a happy, happy man."

From the observation car of the express Adrienne and Mr. Barnes waved their farewells. It looked as though they were already holding hands.

"Good-bye, good-bye," trilled the vision. "I just *know* that this is going to be the very *best* one of them all."

"So that," observed Quarrendar to his party, "is the last we shall see this summer of our friends Adrienne and Cyrus. The Barque Haven Arms, I'm afraid, won't be quite the same without them."

"She'll make him a good wife," boomed Bill Weedon.

"She almost made Stephen one," remarked Etheldreda. "What a Lochinvar!"

It was about this time that Quarrendar mustered up sufficient courage to cast his first look in a long while at Mary Jane Devens Smith, and found her smiling her distracting smile. She too seemed to think that his escape from matrimony was very amusing. She puzzled him. There had been about her for days a far softer mood than usual and no further efforts to thrust him into the meshes of Etheldreda had been forthcoming. Did she consider she had already done enough or in her own new happiness was she willing to let bygones be bygones? He had caught hardly more than casual glimpses of her lately, recognizing that the part of wisdom lay in keeping their paths apart until the dull ache within him should become bearable.

She would be pleased to know, however, that to all intents and purposes she was now the owner of the Barque Haven Arms.

"You've won, Jane," he said quietly as they made their way towards the motors. "The match between old Mr. Bedloe and his nurse has just fallen through and you've seen what happened to Adrienne and Mr. Barnes. Only one romance is left now—Miss Egbert and that Mr. Lewis. The fight between us is finished. We can be friends."

"Oh no," she remarked coolly, "you're mistaken about that. There's a lot of fighting to be done yet. Two more romances were declared this morning at the hotel that you haven't heard of."

"Sure were," roared Bill Weedon, from fifteen feet away. "It's the Rossiter twins—that good-looking little blonde pair—and my pal the All-American fullback and the other college chap who rowed on some crew. Mary Jane here told me the twins were crazy about the boys but the boys haven't a nickel of their own to marry 'em with. So I fell for her idea and offered 'em both good jobs with me out on the Coast. The banns are up. You said you wanted a lot of matches round the joint, didn't you? Always a pleasure, Steve old flivver, to help out a friend."

He was climbing into the aluminum juggernaut and the girl was about to follow him when Quarrendar stopped her. An amazing revelation lay in the seemingly innocent words of the pride of Walla Walla.

"You heard what was just said? About your helping the twins?"

"They're very nice girls, Stephen."

"That's all I wanted to know. You're right, the fighting isn't over. I am onto your delightful new game, Jane."

"And I"—she flung back her dainty head—"have suspected yours for a week. Ever since I heard you telling Mr. Barnes out behind the cabin the morning on the island that you'd help him break off his match with Adrienne. You don't want to talk so loudly when you're plotting something with an open window right next you. And you can't tell me you weren't back of the telephone call that put off to-day's wedding. Your face gave you away. Three romances are on again.

The Barque Haven Arms is yours, Stephen. With my regards."

"Bill," called Quarrendar clearly, "Jane has decided she is coming back with me instead of in your car. We have something to argue about. Will you take Etheldreda along with you?"

"Hop in, sister," shouted the pride of Walla Walla, beaming. "Here's where we burn the road."

Etheldreda took her place beside him, crouched expertly in the low seat. For once she had received a suggestion in silence.

"Go ahead and prove it, Buffalo Bill! You can't scare this child."

The car containing Quarrendar and Mary Jane Devens Smith shot out after them. Green fields, long farmland stretches passed them by and went unnoticed.

"You think that a girl who is marrying a multimillionaire young man doesn't need a $250,000 hotel any more," he said with his jaw set. "That's what it amounts to, doesn't it?"

"Exactly, Stephen. Did you kidnap me just now or what?"

"Do you know if you marry a millionaire and haven't any property of your own there'll be a lot of hard things said about you?"

"What do I care! Isn't that river through the meadows a lovely view?"

"Listen to me! Do you suppose for a minute I'll let you give me a hotel under any such circumstances?"

"And do you suppose for a second I'm going to let

any man give *me* a hotel because I happen to be a girl and he has an idiotic idea I need it more than he does? What'll you do if you don't win it?"

"Never mind what will happen to me. I'll get along. You can't stop me with this new scheme."

"I can make some more matches in the Barque Haven Arms. Lots of them, Stephen. Everybody comes to the shop with their love affairs."

"If you do I'll put an end to them!"

"Now you're talking the way I used to. We've reversed the rôles, haven't we? You're out to give me the hotel by preventing three romances and I'm trying to make you win it by giving you three. You know what your Great-uncle Homer's will said. If there are three matches the place is yours. Absolutely."

"And three are on again now," he raged.

"They are. And I did the last two. How will you get rid of them?"

"You beat me before at the other game, Jane. I suppose you may beat me at this but it won't be for lack of a good, hard battle on my part."

"Just think," she said, smiling, "the wonderful old Barque Haven Arms that you wanted so much to win—all to yourself. No Mary Jane Devens Smith any more to hinder you from getting it. Mary Jane Devens Smith instead to help you to it. Isn't that luck, Stephen? Aren't you glad Mary Smith is going to marry a millionaire?"

"Jane," stormed a young man, "I think you are insufferable!"

[XIV]

IT was all in one vision she came to him—warm, brown hair that waved graciously back from a forehead cool and utterly serene; level, quiet eyes in which seemed to slumber the first shadows of a summer twilight; lips soft and curving with the promise of laughter that would be low and very tender. About her shoulders floated some kind of scarf that rose in foamy background to the proud pillar of her throat and eddied down in shimmering folds. She was coming down the stairs into the foyer of the Barque Haven Arms and he felt that he had been born into a newer and a brighter world. In other words he was more in love with her than ever. From this particular moment time dated.

She gave him her hand brightly. He wanted to hold it forever.

"All ready for the dance, Stephen. You may strike up the music."

"And which is it to be to-night?" he smiled. "Friend or foe?"

"Friends," she lilted. "The charity of the victor to the vanquished. Three romances still in the Barque Haven Arms and the summer almost gone."

"Enemies, Jane. Enemies again, I'm afraid. You haven't seen this yet"—he thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a letter. "The mail was late as usual this evening. It just came in."

The girl slipped gracefully into one of the wide chairs that decorated the foyer while he stood over her, triumphant for once.

"Read it. It's from Ted Holly, the faithful companion I've told you about lots of times. Good old Ted, he certainly has come to the rescue!"

The tiniest smile was playing about Mary Jane Devens Smith's lips as she opened the letter.

"I suppose you're engaged yourself by now," ran the second paragraph. "I am, and it's all due to you, Steve. You remember I told you I fell pretty hard myself a couple of years ago at Barque Haven? Then I get a letter from you telling me she's been up there again this summer and thinks she's going to marry some bird named Lewis. I know better."

"Your friend Holly," observed the girl, "seems a little disjointed in his thoughts."

"He ought to be," grinned Quarrendar. "Read some more."

"So I ran into her on the street in New York about a week after you wrote me. Business is booming and I'm practically commuting between Chicago and the club. She lives here, you know. When I congratulated her on her engagement, of course I took her to tea. We couldn't either of us remember what we'd quarrelled about and busted up for."

"They never do," murmured Mary Jane Devens Smith.

"Read on," said Quarrendar. "He means Miss Louise Egbert."

"She's called off her engagement with that Lewis bird and ours is on again. It seems we've neither of us ever forgotten the other. You can meet us at the church sometime in September. We're having it fast before there's a chance for another quarrel. So long, Steve, old scout, and thanks for your letter that did the trick."

A postscript added hastily: "I don't feel I'm stealing a romance away from you doing this. Hail to the new proprietor of the Barque Haven Arms! Louise tells me the place is fairly teeming with love affairs so I'm not worrying about you."

"'Ran into her on the street' is good," said Quarrendar. "That is if you know Ted Holly. I'll bet he jumped for the nearest taxicab when he heard she was engaged to somebody else and went right up to ask her about it. They're happy and so am I. Only two

romances left. The Barque Haven Arms is yours again, Jane."

"It isn't! It isn't!"

"It is, absolutely! Think that over!"

"I'll find another to make up for the one that's been lost," she flashed. "There are a whole lot around here you don't know anything about but I do."

"Jane," he said, his chin stiffening. "Did you ever happen to think that you've built up for me a chance to wipe every match you can make off the list? Listen to that."

From the veranda outside came a wild shouting, gay and clear with the mirth of youth. Somebody was starting the evening's celebration early.

"You hear her? You've done your best to make the entire hotel consider us engaged. Her mother is convinced that I am proposing for her hand."

"And didn't you?"

"Start all the new romances that you want to. Make all the matches you can to throw the Barque Haven Arms my way. What did that paragraph in Great-uncle Homer's will about fortune-hunting say? All I have to do is to call up a Boston or New York paper and announce my long-awaited engagement to Etheldreda Satterfield and not a single match of yours will count."

The chin of Mary Jane Devens Smith also was up, decidedly up, by this time.

"So you'd marry Etheldreda just to give me the hotel?"

"Everybody expects me to. You engineered the affair. Why should I disappoint them?"

"And you're in love with her?"

"I am in love with you. I intend, as I've told you before, to see you get the hotel."

"You're an idiot!" she flamed. "A conceited ——"

"Egotistical," he prompted.

"Stubborn idiot. I think that I hate you."

"You probably do. There's no reason why you shouldn't. You don't like to be beaten in anything, do you, Jane?"

"Who said I was beaten?" An odd little light was in the violet eyes.

"I do. You're going to bring to your millionaire husband a most acceptable wedding present of a $250,000 hotel whether you want to or not. I'm not the only stubborn idiot within ten feet of us."

"You're doing this," she murmured, "because you say you're in love with me. Well, you deserve about everything that is coming to you."

"And what is coming to me?"

"Wait and see. Go ahead and marry Etheldreda. If you can."

"There's nothing to prevent it," he informed her grimly.

"I don't suppose there is." The old mockery rose, light as a spark, to her eyes. "I've just lost one romance and now you can cost me all the others I'm trying to give you. Oh yes, Stephen, I'm beaten. I am. I am."

"So, after all, we're friends again?"

"Yes, indeed. You can have the first dance tonight."

Beneath the rafters of Barque Haven's country club to the rhythmic, swelling melody of a six-piece volunteer orchestra of youthful fervor and vigorous technique, Stephen Quarrendar was dancing with Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith inside the hour. He had swept her out onto the floor with the first burst of music to greet their arrival, and he would defy anyone in the line along the wall to take her from him.

She gave him an upward, mirthful glance.

"You're very startling and sudden, aren't you?"

"That," he said, "is what I intend to be. You are exactly the person I have been wanting to have all to myself for a long time."

"Ever since you almost married Adrienne? But you're marrying Etheldreda now. And you're in love with ——"

Her slim form was in his arms and they were dancing into paradise together. Somewhere there was song.

"You."

"Sure?"

"Nobody else."

He didn't care what the words might be which were rushing to his lips in tumultuous flood. He didn't know why he should feel so free, so completely contented at the present moment. The girl in his arms could never be his—he realized that. She was the fiancée of a likable, tanned young man of many mil-

lions who might even now be sailing home across the Atlantic to claim her. Other cablegrams and letters with foreign postmarks had decorated the mail-box of Mary Jane Devens Smith since the first stunning message had shattered his hopes.

"You came down a staircase this evening, Jane."

"Of course."

"And I woke up to myself at last. My real education is just beginning."

"That ought to do you good."

The laughter in her voice sent a tingling through him. He guided her out of what seemed to be a whirling, flashing maelstrom of color and swaying figures—did ever a girl dance so lightly?—and they found themselves moving for the moment in a quiet backwater close to the orchestra. Shattering thunder was emerging from the bass drum where Bill Weedon, resplendent and beaming as usual, was adding his efforts as an enthusiastic volunteer to the life of the party. He was happily at home amid the tumult but the drum, it seemed, wasn't going to last much longer.

"Kind Christopher!" he was shouting. "I haven't hit one of these things since the Navy came to Seattle!"

It was getting to be a large night. Etheldreda Satterfield was out on the dusky lawn just off the veranda encircled by her contemporaries. Whatever she was doing the lawn would be no better for it. They were still formal enough at Barque Haven to have a line of patronesses at one end of the room to whom one was supposed to mutter amiable nothings on arriving,

merely as a matter of record. If one didn't one was apt not to be spoken to on the following day. The patrician figure of Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was to be observed at this station, her coiffure inclining graciously to the greetings of each newcomer. Now and then as a particularly violent crash emanated from the bass drum she cast a highly glacial glance in its direction.

But Quarrendar was dancing with Mary Jane Devens Smith. That, after all, was the important thing.

"You weren't in the shop to-day. Or yesterday."

"The Jane and Georgette Shoppe is almost closed," she murmured, her head against his shoulder. "The summer's over next week, you know."

"It's gone like a streak of wildfire," he mused. It seemed incredible that the golden warmth of August was so near its close, that an all-important Labor Day bulked huge already on the horizon. Weeks of sunshine and starry nights, hours of laughter and music, long lazy mornings on the sands had come and passed, merging imperceptibly one into the other and were drawing to an end.

"I think it's because you were up here, Jane."

Her eyes were smilingly on his. Her small face was very, very close. It would be now or never. It should be now while they seemed to be floating divinely on waves of rapturous sound.

"You remember what I told you the night when we were cast away ——"

"Stephen!" Was there warning in her voice?

"You can't stop me, Jane. As long as you happen to be you ——"

"Yes, indeed," said the girl distinctly to someone behind him. "I'd love to have you cut in on this dance."

Quarrendar's hands fell to his sides, freeing the slender figure. The conventions of the dance floor had cut in remorselessly upon them. He turned around prepared to find some intruding youth with neatly-parted hair and an annoying smile. No one was there at all. He caught the faint, gay lilt of laughter as he whirled once more to the girl, the flash of a slipper disappearing through the tall window that opened onto the veranda and its clustering groups. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith had sought safety in numbers.

He took his cigarette in solitude, sitting in a secluded corner of the veranda railing while he thought it over. In a little less than a week he would be delivering his accounting on Great-uncle Homer's hotel. Two matches remained to him but he distrusted to a most disquieting degree the young lady who had just left him. Mary Jane Devens Smith with apparently a round half-dozen of budding romances in reserve was a far more difficult adversary than he had counted upon. Her surrender, her acknowledgment of defeat, had fallen with suspicious ease from her lips. When she was demure and acquiescent she was most dangerous.

There was only one way to make assurance of victory complete. There was only one way to see that Mary Jane Devens Smith became the heiress of the

Barque Haven Arms, instead of himself. He might as well go about it now as any other time.

"All by yourself in the dark, Romeo?" hailed the voice of Etheldreda Satterfield from the lawn below him. "Give me a hand and I'll be up with you. Stephen looks so lonely."

She was perched brightly on the railing, silk stockings very much in display and rebellious lips parted. He wondered what marriage with Etheldreda would really be like. He was practically her property now. As far as that went it didn't matter much any more whom he married. Mary Jane Devens Smith was forever beyond him.

"It's beginning to look like a regular party," suggested Etheldreda. "Let's you and I go inside and show them what real dynamite can do. Maybe if you carry me on one shoulder it would help things along."

For a moment her frank confidences were stilled. No one could have attempted to carry on a conversation against the resounding clamor of a bass drum pounded by a hand which delighted in its work.

"The big, open-hearted backwoodsman," said Etheldreda clearly. "If somebody doesn't throw him out of the window I'll do it myself."

A peculiar light flickered in her eyes. The very sight of Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, was enough, it seemed, to bring that flare of anger to the face of Miss Etheldreda Satterfield. She had looked at him in just that manner, Quarrendar recollected, all during the wedding luncheon of Adrienne and Mr. Barnes.

"Oh, well," she murmured. "I suppose he's a friend of yours. That's the only thing I have against you."

Silence ensued during which Etheldreda's brow grew stormy. One heel was kicking against the railing.

"Etheldreda," said Quarrendar firmly. "There's one thing we have to get straight between us and it might as well come now. I'll try and make it as brief as possible. It won't surprise anybody. You and I——"

Her gaze was on the thronging mass of dancers within. The drum still leaped and pounded. The music rose.

"Don't talk to me, Don Juan. I'm bored. I want a thrill."

Mutiny was in the line of her eyebrows and her feet were far from still.

"The lumber king with a heart of gold," she muttered as the dance stopped to a final gigantic crash. "That's probably his foot going through it."

The genial girth of Bill Weedon appeared in the window. His rubicund countenance was redder than ever, from a combination of honest exertion and good nature, and he was mopping his brow with something cataclysmic in the way of colored handkerchiefs. Four or five of the collegians from the amateur orchestra were in his train. The pride of Walla Walla had thoroughly corrupted the youth of Barque Haven who for weeks had been prone to hail his advent with cheers.

"Stretch your lungs and legs, folks," he was exhort-

ing. "It takes a he-man to blow into brassware all night. I had two saxophones shot out under me once. You bet your grandfather's wooden leg!"

He passed so close that they could almost have touched him but failed to notice the couple on the railing. Etheldreda's eyes were on his broad back.

"The big stiff," she said.

"Etheldreda," began Quarrendar swiftly.

"Poor old Romeo," she tossed at him. "Getting restive for the next round? If you really want to be the ardent swain you might find me a glass of water. That is, if you can't produce anything better."

"I'll get you one." It would be some time before he returned, also. He had been too close, for an instant, to saying something to Etheldreda. A youthful admirer of Miss Satterfield's whom he encountered proved only too willing to act as a substitute in the matter of ice-water and Quarrendar sought shelter on the other side of the veranda. Close at hand a clump of shrubbery offered concealing shadows and he could hear voices from behind it.

They were those of Mary Jane Devens Smith and Bill Weedon. They appeared to be arguing about something.

"Pull the old head down, hunch up the shoulders and go bang for whatever you're after—that's me," the pride of Walla Walla was exulting. "Maybe it's a lumber forest. Maybe it's a ham sandwich. Never failed yet."

The girl's voice was too low for her words to be

distinguished. The rise and fall of laughter was in it. From Bill Weedon emerged practically a roar.

"Can't be any worse off than I am now! Sweep her off her feet, hey? I'll do better than that! I'll give this place the shock of its life! I'm a wild wolf from Walla Walla to-night! Watch me, Mary Jane, watch me! Win or go bust on one throw!"

The orchestra was bending to its task again, this time hurling forth mad strains in which were blended a medley of noises. It may have been that they were endeavoring to suggest the pounding of tom-toms in the jungle on the verge of a particularly attractive tribal war. Whatever it might be there was the rush and swirl of action in it, a clamorous call to wild, unfettered things. Bill Weedon was shouldering down the floor through the dancers with the magnificence of a battleship breasting a succession of petty waves. Couples took care to get out of his path as he aimed for the far window through which Etheldreda Satterfield and her young admirer were just making their entrance. The pride of Walla Walla was taking the shortest course between two points.

He met the pair as they stepped into the room. Etheldreda's partner had just placed his arm about her waist.

"Excuse me, sister, but this is my dance." The statement resounded through the room.

Etheldreda looked up at him languidly.

"You're all wrong, Sitting Bull. And it isn't the first time."

"Sister," declared Weedon earnestly, "you and I are due to have a talk."

"Buffalo Bill, my ears are ringing now."

Quarrendar, following down the room, came upon them face to face, the slim shape of Miss Etheldreda Satterfield opposed to Weedon's wild bulk. The sledge hammer had met the package of dynamite and something was bound to happen.

"They'll ring a lot more!" roared the pride of Walla Walla, in whose eyes gleamed exultation. "I've got my car outside! You belong in it! You're coming with me!"

A ripple of amazement ran through the gallery which had sprung up from nowhere to cluster in a ring about the pair.

"What is it? A fight or an accident?"

"Good old Bill!"

"What's Etheldreda starting now?"

"Ouch! Get off my foot!"

Miss Etheldreda Satterfield's vivid lips delivered cutting speech.

"Don't be so elemental. Go back home and roll a big log for yourself."

Quarrendar was the first to see the conquering light that spread over the face of Bill Weedon. He grinned joyously as though the spirit of combat had gripped him.

"I like you better every minute! Kind Christopher, you don't care what you say! Now are you coming with me?"

"Not while I'm conscious, Rain-in-the-Face."

"Dead or alive!" The roar went jubilantly to the rafters. Quarrendar blinked, unable to credit the testimony of his own vision as from all around him came incredulous sound. Etheldreda and Bill Weedon had disappeared.

"Picked her up and went right through the window with her!"

"There they go over by the car!"

"She's forgotten her lipstick!"

"Am I dreaming or am I not?"

Yards ahead of the others Quarrendar sped through the open French window and reached the railing of the veranda. It was true, all too true. The staccato bursts of an engine springing into life racketed down the night and a gleaming aluminum shape was sweeping in a half circle over the lawn, pointed for the open road beyond. He made out a splotch of white in one seat. That would be Etheldreda, perhaps even now fighting to regain some of her astonished breath. Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, had picked her up off the floor of the Barque Haven country club as casually as though he did it every day of his life and was bearing her away at the rate of some sixty or so miles an hour.

"The primitive West has met the effete East," murmured Quarrendar.

Abruptly he became aware that Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield had emerged in her most dignified manner and had joined the excited group on the veranda.

One could picture her observing through a lorgnette the wild departure of her daughter.

"I have been informed that something has happened." Agitation was fluttering her patrician tones. "And where is Etheldreda?"

"It's nothing to worry about, Mrs. Satterfield. She's just gone off for a ride with Bill Weedon in his motor. They'll be back soon, I'm sure."

"He's run off with her," put in the inevitable announcer of calamity, hidden in the crowd. "It was kidnapping. Maybe it's murder."

"What?" Etheldreda's mother uttered the word raggedly.

"These Westerners are bad," added the voice. "He may throw the body in a ditch."

"Call up the State troopers," suggested another earnest help in time of trouble. "They can shoot him if he won't stop."

Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield, it seemed, had lost the powers of speech. It was a shaking mother that Quarrendar escorted to a chair.

"I—I have a cousin in the War Department at Washington," she quavered. "Would—would that do any good?"

"I don't think so," Quarrendar assured her as calmly as possible. There really did not appear to be any object for calling out the United States cavalry or the Marines at the present moment. "You've just been hearing exaggerations, Mrs. Satterfield. They may have left in a bit of a hurry but what is there surpris-

ing in a couple of young people taking an automobile ride together during a dance?"

"That man!" fell in broken accents. "With that awful man! Barbaric! And Etheldreda has always been so careful. So dependable!"

He escorted her presently to her seat among the line of patronesses but he knew that she would not remain there for long. Etheldreda's maternal relative would want to repair to the tranquillity of her room in the Barque Haven Arms for a good, long rest with the smelling salts handy on the table.

"Can I have a car sent up for you, Mrs. Satterfield? Say in about a quarter of an hour?"

"Do, Stephen," was the grateful murmur. "You're the only person I can really trust."

The strains of the last dance drifted out under the rafters some time later and Quarrendar found Jane poised, slim and erect, in the doorway. The same foamy scarf clung to her shoulders and the violet eyes were laughing.

"You eluded me once this evening, Jane. Not any more though."

"Now you're being Bill Weedon," she smiled. "And I'm not Etheldreda."

The trees made a bending arch in the night overhead as they followed the path that led down to the hotel, whose lighted windows beckoned golden. The wind came off the moors, warm and drowsy and full of little whisperings.

"Did you propose to Etheldreda to-night, Stephen?"

"No!" he almost shouted. "I'm in love with ——"

"Oh dear," said the girl, and he wished that he could see her face in the dusk. "You're beginning that again."

"I'm not beginning it again, I'm keeping it up. Things like that don't ever end. They go on and they go on and then they go on some more. If you have any idea that you can stop me from telling you what I feel about you, you're mistaken."

A low laugh answered him and Stephen Quarrendar began to sense that he was battling against a particularly unkind fate. If further impetuous words came pouring from him Mary Jane Devens Smith would simply vanish from his side again and he didn't know when he would see her next.

"Are you still there?"

"Still here."

"Well, I'll be a little quieter if you want. But that won't prevent me from thinking."

"A little thinking now and then," said a silvery voice, "might not do you the least bit of harm. You might think about Barque Haven's newest romance."

"You mean to tell me that you've put over another one?"

"Stephen, Stephen, and what do you suppose Bill Weedon took Etheldreda out into the night for?"

"You did that?"

"When one match disappears I have to replace it by another, don't I? And when you threaten to do away with all of them by announcing your engage-

ment to Etheldreda I have to eliminate her, don't I? And when the time is growing so short I have to work very, very fast, don't I? That's three questions all with the same answer."

"A romance! Between Etheldreda and Bill Weedon!" His laugh rose, despite all efforts to hold it down. "When she hates him and calls him every name in the dictionary!"

"You don't know the younger generation very well, Stephen. Whom they love most they insult." They were out of the grove now and close to the lighted veranda of the Barque Haven Arms. He could see that she was smiling at him. "Let's pretend a story. Let's make believe Etheldreda has been wild about Bill Weedon all along but she wasn't going to fall into his arms because no girl likes to do that with a man. Let's make believe she wanted to hold him off and play with him as long as she could and that's why she selected you to make him jealous. Let's pretend I told him all about it to-night."

"And then let's pretend you sent him in to carry her off the dance floor in front of everybody," inquired Quarrendar. "You ought to write fairy tales."

"Maybe I should. Are you missing Etheldreda already, Stephen?"

"I am not!" He wanted badly—extremely badly—to take Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith by her slim shoulders and shake her. She was a menace. "I don't believe a word you say. It's impossible!"

"Of course it is," she carolled lightly as they as-

cended the steps between the pillars. "I wouldn't ever think of such a thing as suggesting to Bill Weedon that he sweep a girl off her feet and take her where he could settle his love affair with her once and for all. It isn't done even if a whole summer hotel depends on it. I must have been playing with you again, Stephen. But they really have been gone for hours."

"We'll find them right here waiting for us," he said. The statement fairly bristled with confidence. "I know Etheldreda."

He nodded a greeting to Mr. Arnold who was approaching across the foyer with a harassed look on his customarily genial countenance.

"Nothing wrong I hope, Mr. Arnold? No more conflagrations in the kitchen or complaints about hot water?"

Mr. Arnold shook his head.

"Just a call for a doctor, two trained nurses and I gather, an ambulance. We've sent up three pitchers of ice-water which I think will pull her through. It's Mrs. Satterfield being unwell and, between you and me, rocking the Barque Haven Arms to its foundations. It seems her daughter telephoned in about half an hour ago saying that she and Mr. Weedon intended to stay out all night riding around the Cape and get married in the morning at the first town they can find with a city hall and a mayor."

Somewhat numbly Quarrendar glanced at Mary Jane Devens Smith who had engineered this latest blow. He saw Mr. Arnold smile at the girl.

"And there's a radio came in for you from Boston while you were up at the dance."

Once more an envelope was riffling in her hands.

"Put it away!" burst from him. "I can't stand the sight of those things!"

"I like them," she murmured, with song in her voice. Her gaze lifted. "This one is from the ship. It's docking in Boston to-morrow or the day after."

"And that means ——?"

"Peter."

"Peter Van Dyckman, your—your fiancé?"

"Yes, Stephen. The summer's over. The Jane and Georgette Shoppe," she made a gesture as of one turning a key swiftly, irrevocably—"is closing. I'm to meet him as soon as he lands."

"And then Miss Mary Smith of Denver will become Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman of New York? Immediately?"

"If not sooner." The violet eyes were soft with thought, with dreams, with tenderness. "I'll have lots to tell about. So I'm leaving here for Boston to-morrow."

"And you're not coming back?"

"I—I don't expect to."

[XV]

THE fifty-eight page will of Great-uncle Homer Quarrendar was in his nephew's hands and right across the room, invitingly open of top, stood a waste-basket. In another moment Stephen Quarrendar was going to throw the will at that waste-basket. After which act he would go downstairs for a final interview with Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith before she left for Boston and wedding bells. His whole summer had certainly turned out to be a ghastly failure.

"She's beaten me at every turn," he informed himself. "She's been just one jump ahead of me all the way. And now this afternoon she's leaving and I don't suppose I'll ever see her again. There seems no particular reason, from her point of view, why I should.

The Barque Haven Arms is mine, mine, mine—hopelessly and forever mine."

No chance existed now of projecting himself into another entanglement that would save a $250,000 property for a certain violet-eyed young lady. The strategy of Mary Jane Devens Smith had been of too high an order to allow that. She had directed affairs so that Etheldreda Satterfield had been rushed off the scene before his very eyes and with a matter of days only separating him from an accounting of his stewardship of the hotel the prospect loomed as hopeless.

"I imagine I'm really glad of it," he muttered. "Good old Bill Weedon and Etheldreda make an attractive pair. I hope they build their first house of reinforced concrete so it will stand the shock of having the world's most dynamic couple within its walls. Also the roof had better be propped up with steel girders when Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield makes her initial visit as a mother-in-law."

He shuddered slightly as the thought of that patrician dowager recurred to him. Another telephone call had come in for her about noon, and she was no longer demanding doctors but lawyers. Worse than that, she had demanded Quarrendar.

"They've done it!" she gasped. Her room had subtly taken on the atmosphere of a sick chamber and she herself sat enthroned in a chaise longue in her very best negligée. "That man! And Etheldreda knows how subject my centers of sensitiveness are to shock. What is the world coming to?"

Quarrendar refrained from informing Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield just what the world was coming to. His own, he felt, was coming to an end.

"I don't think it's turned out so very badly, after all," he said. "They're both pretty much in love with each other and, of course, Bill Weedon is a remarkably successful young man. His lumber woods to say nothing of his salmon canneries ——"

"Fish and kindling!" moaned Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield in tones of utter horror. "I heard him call it that myself. It is all the fault of your hotel. I shall leave it at once! The very words make me shudder. A fish and kindling man!"

"But their marriage ——"

"I shall have it annulled. As soon as I am well enough to travel I shall go to New York and see a lawyer myself. The mayor who married them! I shall have him impeached!"

"I wouldn't go so far as to do that, Mrs. Satterfield. They were both more than willing, not to say eager, you know."

"And you are responsible for the whole thing, Stephen!" She rattled her spoon feebly in her medicine glass. "After what you said to me that night! Who can one trust in these degenerate days?"

His last look showed an agitated mother beckoning to her maid. Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield had noticed in the pier glass across the room a most unbecoming disarrangement of her coiffure, caused by emotion.

"And they didn't even tell me where they were go-

ing," her words followed him. "They said they would travel until the gasoline gave out or all the tires burst, and then stop."

Quarrendar had sought the shelter of his own room in a thoughtful mood. Here he would be safe from an outraged dowager and he wouldn't have to observe bright, youthful life flowing through foyer and corridors in the last-week revelry of what had been for many a gorgeous season by the waves. But not for him.

Great-uncle Homer . . . Barque Haven Arms . . . Jane . . . Jane . . . Jane . . .

It had once been a joyous lyric. Now it was a dirge.

"In you go," he exclaimed, raising the fifty-eight page mass of legal verbiage. "You've caused me more trouble than I ever supposed a young man of promising qualities could wind around himself. The three love matches that you wanted"—he aimed the offending will of Great-uncle Homer at the waste-basket —"have been made all right. But it was a girl made them for me and not myself. And I don't want them."

A bulky document whirled through the air, its sheets rustling in the velocity of its passage, and plumped into the maw of the receptacle. It was a perfect shot and for the first time that day the Quarrender smile appeared.

"It seems I can succeed in one thing even if it's only throwing a will at a basket. No, on further thought, I don't seem to have got rid of it all."

A single page, unwilling to fly with the rest, had remained between his thumb and forefinger. A num-

ber of short and pithy paragraphs appeared to make up its contents. The words of one of them leaped at him, scanned now for the first time.

. . . "elopement . . . without the consent of the parents . . . null and void . . ."

A shout rang through the room up under the portico of the Barque Haven Arms.

"Good Lord! I remember now! I thought I'd read it all and I haven't! And I don't think Mary Jane Devens Smith has either. No girl could ever go through a barbed wire entanglement of words like these. Good old Great-uncle Homer! Of course he wouldn't want elopements to count. Match Number Three is off! Bill Weedon and Etheldreda vanish from the picture! Consent of the parents? Our social leader Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield would die first!"

He was on his feet, jubilant, exulting. His hand reached out for the telephone.

"The Jane and Georgette Shoppe," he ordered crisply. A moment later the most charming voice in the world answered him.

"Jane? Remember, I'm motoring you over to the junction at four. And I'm going to have something quite important to tell you."

"You'll have to hurry, Stephen," came a laugh that thrilled him to the core. "I'm all packed up in the shop. And everything else too."

"That will be all right. I've had some highly interesting news."

"Really?"

"I certainly have. You'll be surprised when I see you."

"And you won't let me know what it is now?"

"I will not. But don't think you've given me this hotel absolutely as yet. I'll fight to the bitter end."

"That suits me. To the bitter end, Stephen."

The wire went silent. Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith had efficiently concluded the conversation by hanging up on him. Quarrendar turned just as a knock sounded on the door.

"Come in," he called briskly. A stout, middle-aged gentleman with a broad, energetic face entered, a recent arrival who had been in the Barque Haven Arms scarcely forty-eight hours.

"I'm not disturbing you, I hope, Mr. Quarrendar?"

"Not in the least, Mr. Rossiter. Always glad to be of any service."

"Then I'd appreciate it if you would tell me what you know personally about this man Weedon who has been staying here. My two girls are engaged to boys who are going to work for him in the West. I naturally want to know more about him." The father of the Rossiter twins evidently believed in coming straight to the point on all matters involving either family affairs or business. He settled himself in a chair and clamped a cigar between his teeth with no undecided air.

"Financially, I am sure, Mr. Rossiter ——"

A gesture interrupted him. "I've looked into that. The man is a comer out on the Coast. Lumber forests,

a couple of big canneries, a copper mine, apartment houses, a bank, two theatres, land in half a new town that's building ——"

"What?" inquired Quarrendar in amazement. "He has all that?"

"That and more. Possibly he isn't given to mentioning all his interests. He seems to possess a genius for making money grow over night on bushes. But if my prospective sons-in-law are to join his organization I want to know all I can about him as a private individual. A whirlwind in courtship as well as in the commercial world, I gather."

For many minutes Quarrendar found himself conversing on the subject of Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, in the guise of friend and loyal ally. Mr. Rossiter knocked a long ash from his cigar.

"I think you've given me enough. Seems to be a good man to work for in every way. If the boys have the ability I take it he intends to push them along."

"He does," Quarrendar assured him. "I'm positive of that."

"Well," said Mr. Rossiter, "that would seem to settle everything. They're both the attractive, dependable, clean-cut type that ought to get along. But they're both going to make good out there before they marry my girls."

"What did you say?" The words burst from Quarrendar.

"Just that there won't be any double wedding until they've been in business for over a year. They're all

pretty young yet. I mean to have both those young chaps prove their mettle in at least a twelve months' test before they come into the family. If they show the right stuff, and I think they will, then I'll give them the best send-off there is with all my heart. Let's call it the winter after the coming one. I hope I haven't been too curious, Mr. Quarrendar."

"No—not the least—wonderful—great ——" Ragged words were falling from his lips as he escorted the father of the Rossiter twins to the door. Romances Number One and Two had been postponed by a careful, thoroughgoing parent who took no chances. They had been thrust beyond the limit set for the matches of Barque Haven. In other words, they didn't mean anything any longer.

The Barque Haven Arms belonged to Mary Jane Devens Smith. A dazzling, slim person was its proprietress and would be for all time. Quarrendar had lost her but he had won the long struggle between them. Not a single romance remained. Smiling and with his shoulders defiantly squared he strode for the stairs, after allowing Mr. Rossiter a decent interval in which to depart by the elevator. He would have more than news for Mary Jane Devens Smith as they sped over the sunlit road to the junction. She would have to admit that he was the victor at last.

In the Jane and Georgette Shoppe, stripped now of its riotous ranks of color, trunks stood locked and strapped and tagged for forwarding later—lonely symbols of the glories that had departed. The walls looked

wan and bare, the empty glass cases disconsolate. Nowhere was there a sign of Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith. Rapidly he traversed the corridor leading into the foyer and more rapidly yet he approached the desk.

The clerk nodded brightly.

" Miss Smith? Oh yes, she left the hotel in a car a while ago. Checked out. She told me she had decided to take an earlier train. She left a note for you, sir."

Numbly he grasped at it. So Mary Jane Devens Smith, while he had been talking to Mr. Rossiter upstairs, had calmly ordered a car and gone off in it to meet her fiancé in Boston. Perhaps she had never meant to see him at all before she left. Perhaps she wanted to be rid of him forever.

" It's all for the best," ran the single sentence in her handwriting.

" It is not! " shouted Quarrendar. An open-mouthed desk clerk watched him dart across the foyer and out onto the veranda. An equally amazed garage helper a moment or so later observed a young man whose face was tense hurl a powerful motor out through the door and into the road, vanishing in a cyclone of dust. Stephen Quarrendar intended to catch Mary Jane Devens Smith on the way to the train or die trying. Maybe he would snatch her off it and never let her go. But she too must have had speed in the back of her dainty head for not once on the long miles did he glimpse the shape of a car ahead.

He saw one from the hotel, however, drawn up be-

side the platform at the junction. He saw also the string of coaches of a train in motion, his ears caught the shrilling of a whistle and the grinding of wheels. A road swept from the station alongside the tracks for a mile or more and Quarrendar sent his motor roaring over it. It was his last chance. He was running even with the last coach now, he was creeping up on the next one. And in the window, her eyes dancing, was Mary Jane Devens Smith.

"Good-bye," she called.

"Bill Weedon and Etheldreda are out! Elopements don't go!" he cried and notched another burst of speed out of his engine.

"Don't forget me, Stephen."

"And the Rossiter twins can't get married for more than a year!" he roared. "All your romances are gone! That's my news!"

"It was a lovely summer."

Through the rattling of the train could she catch a single word he was saying to her? Desperately he tried again.

"You've won the hotel! I'm giving it to you for a wedding present. It's yours!"

She waved a small hand at him through the window. Ahead the road curved inland and he would have to follow it or go crashing through a stone wall into oblivion.

"*You'll have to come back now!*"

She didn't even seem to hear that prodigious shout. He measured the distance with his eye. One more call

to her and that would be all before she disappeared down the bright line of rails that led to Boston and ——

Stephen Quarrendar gritted his teeth, leaning well out from the wheel. It might be treachery to an absent fiancé but he didn't care.

"I LOVE YOU, JANE!!!"

The insane shrieking of the train whistle drowned his cry. Violet eyes, laughing face, soft, curving lips passed from him in a blur as he felt both front wheels of his car go into the ditch.

[XVI]

STEPHEN QUARRENDAR sat in the sunlight on the veranda of the Barque Haven Arms, heedless of the greetings cast at him by various passing guests and desiring strictly to be let alone. He practically glared at the inoffensive gentleman from Room 132 who tiptoed up and beamed upon him with the manner of one who is everybody's friend.

"So sorry to hear you've hurt your arm," he sympathized, indicating the left member in the silk sling. "How did you do it?"

"I sprained my wrist churning the ice-cream freezer for to-day's luncheon," said Quarrendar savagely. "Either that or trying to lift a trunk into the baggage elevator. You may take your choice."

"Can't get through a summer without some sickness in a hotel," chirped the intruder. "How unfortunate! But Mrs. Satterfield is downstairs again to-day, I see."

He blinked his somewhat weak eyes and took himself off, perhaps to find another victim upon whom to lavish words of comfort.

A swift twinge caused the young man in the wicker chair to shift the position of the arm in the sling. He had been lucky that it wasn't a couple of ribs or a broken leg. If that ditch in front of the wall had been deeper or his one motion towards the brakes had been anything less than instantaneous he might not now be sitting here in the mellow radiance of Labor Day morning.

"I owe the Barque Haven Arms for a car," he muttered. "But I guess it can stand the loss in a good cause. I'd be willing to do it all over again."

Once more, it seemed, he was struggling to his feet amid the disorder of an extremely well-ditched motor, seeing far down the vista of rails and telegraph poles the vanishing cars of a train headed for Boston. A voice with a lilt in it was echoing in his ears.

"Not a word of her in four days. Why should I have expected it anyhow? She doesn't even realize that the Barque Haven Arms is hers. And there's no way at all of getting hold of her."

Self-communing ceased at this moment inasmuch as towards him there was approaching a neatly-groomed figure in a business suit of subdued hue. Mr. Ethan Hulbert of New York City was still the perfect man

of law, poised and precise, while about him streamed the brilliant pageant of a big Cape hotel. He even carried a newspaper, folded into a neat square, under his arm. There was nothing lacking to complete the illusion of the perfect attorney of affairs except a brief case. Mr. Hulbert had left that up in his room.

"Everything comfortable, I hope, Mr. Hulbert? A good sleep last night and the right sort of breakfast for you? The Barque Haven Arms does things pretty well."

"I have been extremely well cared for," said the lawyer. "Your Great-uncle Quarrendar's hotel appears to be better managed and more successful than ever. But we must not forget that my visit is based primarily upon a matter of business. To-day is the day on which your report is due and it is now after ten o'clock. Shall we say at eleven? Or possibly you would prefer to postpone it until after luncheon?"

Correct and flawlessly dignified to the very end, Mr. Ethan Hulbert awaited Quarrendar's answer. At any time during the day, his attitude declared, he would be at the service of this young man who had or had not satisfactorily completed his task.

"Let's get it over with fairly soon. Call it eleven. I have to get my things together after that and go out and scramble for a job."

"I beg your pardon?" Mr. Hulbert appeared not to have caught the meaning of Stephen Quarrendar's last remark.

"I was just a bit previous. I'll explain everything

to you at the stated moment. It won't take very long either. There will be only the two of us."

"I had hoped that Miss Mary Smith of Denver, the other legatee, might be present. It is more in order if all the parties to such an affair are in attendance at its close. But, of course, this will prevent her from being with us."

Mr. Hulbert's long white fingers turned over his paper, a first edition of a Boston journal of the morning, and folded it to show the space reserved for news of the last moment before going to press. The item which he displayed was only of a few lines but it carried a clamorous caption:

* * * *

VAN DYCKMAN SCION OF WEALTH WEDS DENVER GIRL

Peter Van Dyckman, Jr., of New York, and Miss Mary Smith of Denver, Colorado, were married early last evening in the rectory of the Little Brick Church of this City. The ceremony was private and no details are as yet obtainable. The bridegroom is a prominent member of one of the wealthiest families in America.

* * * *

That was all. The enterprising newspaper, it seemed, had not even had time to throw onto its front page a half column or so detailing the millions and social position of the Van Dyckmans. Full descriptions of the ceremony, the bride, the rectory, would all be

forthcoming in the later editions. The sheet slipped from Quarrendar's hand and lay, unheeded, on the flagging at his feet while his eyes went out to the blue, heartless sweep of sea. On it he had sailed with Mary Jane Devens Smith. On that island—a thin, dark line far out towards the horizon—he had known his great moment. The winds that ruffled over the waters had caressed her hair. Her eyes had smiled at him, her voice had been music through hours of dream.

And now ——

Everything was finished. She had gone from him irrevocably. Large newspapers were not in the habit of being mistaken over weddings such as this.

Aimlessly Quarrendar's gaze turned from the sea, passed over the composed figure of Mr. Ethan Hulbert and roved down the road past the little grove of pines. A gleam caught his eye as of some shining chariot approaching. Distraction, if only for the moment, had arrived. The aluminum-bodied roadster which rolled luxuriously towards the portico of the hotel was new, glisteningly new, and to gather from the expressions of its two passengers so was the world in which they were finding themselves. The smiling, determined-looking young man at the wheel in impeccable golfing togs and cap to match presented a picture of the typical healthy business-getter of thirty or so off for a holiday. As for the charming young lady beside him, her eyes were alight and one hand was tucked in proprietary fashion within his huge elbow. They made, as the saying goes, an ideal couple. Sleek and supple a big

German police dog with aristocratic ears and a red tongue lolling out occupied the running board, accepting as his due the occasional pats which the young lady bestowed upon his head.

"Nice doggie," she said. "Nice Walla Walla."

The roadster actually slowed as it came to the turn leading up to the crescent wall and the veranda. The horn sounded.

"Don't you worry," the driver boomed reassuringly. "We'll get a swell reception. I always do."

"Worry?" said the young lady. "I gave that up long ago. Here we are at last, darling."

"Bill!" shouted Quarrendar incredulously from above. People appeared to be coming from all directions and a scattered cheer rose to hail the returned adventurers. "Bill Weedon! Etheldreda!"

"I'll say it's us! Where are your eyes, Steve? Or don't you know me in the new clothes? Etheldreda here likes 'em quieter than I pick out for myself. Old married couple we are now."

He gripped Quarrendar's hand in a grasp that almost ruined it and continued to exult:

"Always knew I'd give this boarding house something to talk about over the teacups. Kind Christopher!" He shot a glance at Etheldreda Weedon, née Satterfield, as the familiar exclamation burst from him. "S-sh, old flivver, she doesn't like me to yell as much as I used to. Responsibilities of life and all that. But there's nothing like marriage in a hurry, is there?"

"No, darling," said Etheldreda approvingly.

" She ran me ragged first, I'll tell the world! It seems they want you to suffer before they put you out of your pain. When I found out she wasn't crazy over you I hit the roof. Where's my friend Mary Jane who told me the whole story? We owe a lot to her."

" In Boston. Or somewhere. I don't know," Quarrendar spoke soberly. There was happiness here in two smiling faces but there was none, it seemed, coming to him.

" She'll turn up," proclaimed Weedon, heartily. " This place wouldn't be home without her. And now for the big interview with the new relative. Here's where I sell myself as a son-in-law to a lady we know. You bet your grandmother's ——"

" Bill, darling! "

" Give me time! You can't comb all the kinks out of a wild wolf from Walla Walla in a week. Hey, Steve? It looks like I'm all settled down. But "—his tones dropped to a whisper—" I'll have a night out now and then, don't you fret. You and me, what? "

" It's nice to see you again, Stephen," smiled Etheldreda in her friendliest manner. " If I want my life saved any more I'll promise not to call on you."

Arm-in-arm the eloping pair sauntered through the gathering of their well-wishers bound for the far corner where Mrs. T. Shenstone Satterfield was to be found at this hour when in health. Already the sound of Bill Weedon's booming was beginning to arise. He was, in all likelihood, hailing his mother-in-law with delighted fervor from twenty yards away. The charm-

ing Etheldreda might be able to subdue the pride of Walla Walla to a certain extent but no power on earth could quiet him utterly—marriage or no marriage.

"The wilder they are the faster they settle down," he murmured. "I'll take back what I said about a concrete honeymoon villa. Something even informs me that the days, or rather nights, of the recent Mrs. Weedon's impossible activities are growing shorter. It's wonderful what a few words by a mayor at a city hall can do to you."

Quarrendar sighed, alone on the broad veranda. The crowd that had rushed up to meet Bill Weedon and his bride had ebbed away. Was there a cloud passing over the sun or did he just imagine that the sea and land looked darker? At his feet lay a newspaper, not neatly folded now, but blown against the railing in derelict confusion. He felt a good deal as though he too had been swept up and thrown into the discard. It was time he found Mr. Ethan Hulbert and sat down to dismiss forever from his life the Barque Haven Arms and with it the memories of a certain laughing, radiant, alluring, mocking, maddening girl.

But he knew, even as he walked unseeingly through the light-hearted groups in the foyer, that he would never forget her. She might be married to someone else but he loved her more than ever.

Through the door of the managerial sanctum he caught sight of the broad back of Mr. Arnold bent over the desk. It was a busy morning, this last day of the season, for a genial executive. There was also a more

fitting place than the office for the conference which was scheduled.

"Find Mr. Ethan Hulbert," he ordered the nearest bellboy. "Tell him I shall be in the sun parlor."

"Yes, sir," came the cheerful answer and the bellboy shot off as though it were actually a pleasure to carry out his instructions. Stephen Quarrendar had given his last order as owner of the Barque Haven Arms. This great caravansary, filled from foyer to roof with attractive people, would pass from his hands in another quarter of an hour.

"I am right," he told himself stubbornly. "It may have cost me a hotel but I'll stick to it."

He was looking about him at the white walls of the Jane and Georgette Shoppe, once more nothing but a sun parlor. The glamour of past days could never come again. No more would gay frocks and hats vie against each other in gorgeous hues within its door. Here there had been romance and high adventure—a slim person who smiled and tantalized and flamed with defiance all in the same minute.

"Ah!" said Ethan Hulbert's dry voice, "punctual to the moment, Mr. Quarrendar. Your great-uncle was very formal on that point throughout his life."

"The sooner we start the sooner it will be over, won't it? I see you've brought the will with you. We might draw up to the table here and go into executive session."

The will was laid down. On this very spindle-legged table Mary Jane Devens Smith had perched, all in

white, one morning when he had come down to inquire exactly why she had caused him to walk home from a motor ride. Desperately he brushed the picture aside and it was replaced by one of her in a lavender smock, requesting him to leave and leave at once. The whole room seemed alive with little, flashing bits of her, turn where he would. It was haunted.

"A cigar, Mr. Hulbert?" he asked wildly. He could see Miss Mary Jane Devens Smith now trying on a pert bit of a hat in front of a ghostly pier glass, which gave back laughing eyes.

"After our business is concluded, thank you." Mr. Hulbert's fingers had resumed contact with the cover of the document exactly as in his office that far-distant day in June. "We are all ready to proceed with the matter, I presume?"

"I—oh—yes. Let's go ahead."

Mary Jane Devens Smith whose appealing figure had melted into nothingness before the glass reappeared in the doorway. This time she had on a tailormade travelling dress of dark blue and carried a tiny vanity case. Her ankles were slimmer and more exquisite in silk than ever.

"Go away," came thickly from Quarrendar. "Go away, please, won't you? First you're on the table, then you're across the room or in front of the mirror. I see you everywhere I look and you're different every time."

"I didn't quite catch the remark?" Mr. Hulbert scanned an agitated young man with open curiosity.

"It's that girl. I'm going crazy, I guess." The Mary

Jane Devens Smith in the entrance had tripped forward a couple of steps. "I see her all the time—night and day." With a last effort he gathered himself into some semblance of normality. "Where were we? Oh, yes—we can get right down to business. There's no one to wait for."

"Aren't you going to wait for me?" inquired Mary Jane Devens Smith coolly.

"You—you—you're real!"

"I hope I am." A delicious smile flashed. "Yes, Stephen, I've come back for the finish. We had a beautifully early start from Boston and drove fast all the way. You can see the car outside—it's a big one with a coat-of-arms."

"And your—your ——?"

"Peter!" called the girl clearly. The tanned young man of his own age whom Quarrendar had met in the Jane and Georgette Shoppe in New York appeared in the doorway. He was even more tanned than when Quarrendar had last seen him and he wore a happy, conquering air. Distinction clung about him. His smile was frank and disarmingly attractive.

"You remember Mr. Quarrendar?"

"Yes, indeed," said the bridegroom. "Very glad to see you again."

He said it as though he meant it. Young Mr. Van Dyckman wore his millions well.

There are no particular rules on how to receive the new husband of the girl with whom you are in love, especially when he comes sauntering along as though it

were the most ordinary thing in the world for him and his bride to drop in. For a single racking moment Stephen Quarrendar endured an agony that he never afterwards wanted to recall. Hazily he made out that the girl's face was smiling, as though he and Peter Van Dyckman ought to be friends. They had dropped on him out of a clear sky and his brain was still reeling.

Then he caught hold of himself with a wrench that tore. He too could smile if it had to be done. But Mary Jane Devens Smith was hurling shock after shock at him.

"Good of you to come," he managed. "I understand congratulations are in order."

"For me, you bet," said Peter Van Dyckman cheerily. He, of course, knew nothing of Quarrendar's feelings. "I had to work like a nailer though to put it over."

Once more his mirth showed itself. Wealth and the whirl of society it seemed had made him anything but bored or stand-offish. You couldn't help liking him on sight. Mary Jane Devens Smith, who had descended upon him at the eleventh hour with a brand-new husband, was a lucky girl.

"And this is Georgette, my partner who was." Another young lady had entered the room, a young lady taller by some inches than Mary Jane Devens Smith with a striking complexion and fetching black eyes. The Jane and Georgette Shoppe certainly produced beauties. She too appeared to be in the most contagious of high spirits. Her frock, clinging and simple,

breathed eloquently of the Rue de la Paix. Her hat was a dream. She was dashing, smart, delightful. Any man who got her could count himself fortunate.

"So you're Stephen Quarrendar?" she laughed. "I've heard lots about you in letters. That partner of mine has written some wicked things."

"I don't doubt it," said Quarrendar. "She has almost everybody at her mercy, hasn't she?"

"Georgette came back from Paris on the same boat as Peter." The explanation fell lightly from Mary Jane Devens Smith. "So of course she was at the wedding and I brought her down here. Georgette and I would never think of getting married unless the other one was there."

"Never," rippled Georgette.

"We grew up together. Did we all fall upon you like three bolts from the blue, Stephen?"

"Pretty much. But you're all as welcome as can be. The family gathering, as one might say, is complete. So now ——"

"We can hear what Mr. Hulbert has to say. Peter and Georgette know all about the will. I've told them. And they absolutely insisted on seeing the finish."

"It's a scream," proffered Georgette in her friendliest manner. "The whole thing is the most remarkable ever. Isn't it, Peter?"

"It's glorious," announced the possessor of millions. He winked at Quarrendar. "Where there's a will there's a lot of trouble—what? Sounds like a game of 'Hotel, hotel, who's got the hotel?' to me."

Four chairs—all there were—scraped a little as the circle was formed close to the spindle-legged table a few moments later. Introductions and preliminaries were over and this was cut-and-dried business.

"No," carolled a gay voice, "don't anybody try to give me their chair. I'm sitting on top of the trunk."

Above their heads she perched on a glistening, upended sample of the Jane and Georgette baggage, her heels beating the faintest tatoo against its side. Impossible to think of her as Mary Jane Devens Smith Van Dyckman. Always she would remain to Stephen Quarrendar as plain Mary Jane Devens Smith.

"You are all familiar then with the provisions of the late Homer Quarrendar's last will and testament?" Mr. Ethan Hulbert, after a single attention-attracting cough had opened the conference with his habitual directness. He had been paying no attention, it seemed, to the small talk proceeding about him. A quartet of nods from the dainty toss of Mary Jane Devens Smith to the weary acknowledgment of Stephen Quarrendar gave him his answer. "Three love matches must have been made by you, Mr. Quarrendar, at the Barque Haven Arms between June fifteenth and to-day to culminate within the year in marriage or the hotel goes to Miss Mary Smith of Denver."

"That we all understand, Mr. Hulbert."

"Such being the case the affair should be one of moments only. I am more than pleased to see Miss Mary Smith, or rather"—he made a brief impressive pause—"Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman, Jr., present at this

moment. If any discussion should arise between the competing legatees I am sure it can be settled on the spot."

"There won't be any," said the girl on the trunk lightly. Her heels seemed to be dancing.

"None," declared Quarrendar. "You can call that a promise."

"And now all that is necessary is to ask Mr. Quarrendar for his report. If I am not incorrect, Mr. Quarrendar, you wrote to me some weeks ago that three romances had blossomed—the word is that used frequently by your great-uncle—in the hotel." He consulted a sheet of paper slipped inside the bound copy of the will lying on the table. "Mr. James F. Bedloe, manufacturer, of Lynn, Massachusetts, and his trained nurse; Mr. Cyrus K. Barnes and Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers; Mr. Charles Lewis and Miss Louise Egbert."

"Right, Mr. Hulbert. I wrote you that. Give them to me again, please."

"Mr. James F. Bedloe and trained nurse."

"Breach-of-promise suit."

"Mr. Cyrus Barnes and Mrs. Adrienne Chalmers."

"Postponed. You investigated her status and notified her husband that her divorce was illegal."

"I did. At your request." The lawyer's voice resumed without a trace of emotion—precise, enigmatical. "Mr. Charles Lewis and Miss Louise Egbert."

"Off. Miss Egbert is marrying a very good friend of mine instead."

"And so"—Mr. Hulbert placed his hand on the will

—" you now announce that your three matches are gone."

" I do."

" There are no others? "

" Three more," broke in Mary Jane Devens Smith calmly. " Ask him about them. They're all he needs."

She sent a dazzling glance down to Quarrendar from her height. Triumph was in it—that and something else.

" Jane," he demanded, " you didn't hear then what I was calling to you on the train? "

Her lips curved deliciously.

" No-o, Stephen. There was such a noise."

" Then I'll tell you here and now." He faced around to the waiting Mr. Hulbert. " As Mrs.—er—as the young lady has just said when she left here three more romances had been declared."

" Bill Weedon and Etheldreda, Stephen."

" An elopement. Without the consent of her parents." Quarrendar saw Mr. Hulbert's gray head nod. He, of course, knew the will of Great-uncle Homer to its final comma. " Barred for that reason."

" Correct."

" The Rossiter twins, Stephen."

" A double wedding delayed until their fiancés have spent at least a year in business. Impossible for another thirteen or fourteen months. Outside the time limit. Barred."

" Correct, Mr. Quarrendar."

" That's all the romances in the Barque Haven

Arms." He did not allow his glance to stray towards Mary Jane Devens Smith but kept it fixed on the lawyer's impassive countenance. If he had he would have seen the violet eyes soft and wistful and then sparkling with subdued flame. "The hotel is therefore awarded to Miss Mary Smith, isn't it? There can't possibly be any more matches within the year."

Mr. Hulbert leaned back and surveyed the small circle that hung upon his words. Georgette had her hands clasped excitedly in her lap—smooth white hands, flawless of texture and devoid of ornament. Beside her Peter Van Dyckman, smiling humorously, appeared more than interested.

"I guess that blows the game, what?" he observed cheerfully to no one in particular.

Softly Quarrendar rose and stepped over to the tall trunk where his courageous little foe sat. The accents of Mr. Hulbert came, clipped and emphatic, pronouncing judgment.

"The matter appears to be completed. I congratulate Mr. Quarrendar on the equable spirit with which he receives his loss. It is not often that a disappointed heir accepts his fortune with such a good grace. I declare the Barque Haven Arms, in view of the testimony submitted, to be the property of Miss Mary Smith. That is, Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman, Jr."

"I've won!" breathed Quarrendar in a charming small ear. "I've won! Your wedding present, Jane. From me. To the millionaire's bride!"

Her laugh rang clear and joyous in the silence that

fell. It drifted out through the window into the sunlight of the September morning, warm and thrilling.

"And I declare the Barque Haven Arms to be the property of Stephen Quarrendar! The last trick is the trick that counts! Mine isn't played yet!"

The silvery notes of a clock chiming the hour of noon fell from the wall where an ornamental timepiece ticked against the panels.

"Nobody can guess what this one is! Not Peter, not Georgette, not Mr. Hulbert—not you, Stephen. It's all over now! I just caught a glimpse of a handkerchief peeping round the corner of the door."

She raised her voice a note. "It's all right! Come in, Leon! I want you!"

[XVII]

LEON, the gallant chef of the Barque Haven Arms, came striding through the door. This was no ordinary individual of white cap and jacket brandishing a long-handled fork or a ladle but a polished, talented French gentleman in a braided morning coat with a boutonnière in his lapel and a superb pair of waxed moustaches. His black hair rose nobly from his forehead and he carried himself with the air of the artist who is conscious of his gift. Almost daily for weeks since the notable affair of the conflagration Quarrendar had seen and talked to him as he passed through his domain on inspections or consulted with him in the office concerning the menu. Leon had his own suite of rooms in the staff wing and it was nobody's business if the manage-

ment made no objection to his wandering through the foyer in his leisure hours to observe the throng gathered there. Distant connections of old French families fallen on distressing times have chosen stranger professions than that of chef in a great summer hotel. Stephen Quarrendar knew all about Leon.

He clicked his heels and made a bow worthy of a drawing room.

"Monsieur Quarrendaire! Mademoiselle Smeeth! A votre service!"

"It was the young lady who called you and not myself, Leon. I haven't any idea what she wants but make yourself at home. We're all friends here."

Georgette sent one of her smiles at Leon who met it with another splendid bow. Whereupon he straightened and gave his moustache a magnificent twist. Confidence and pride seemed to radiate from him this morning.

"Mademoiselle Smeeth! I await at ze door as you ask! From ze quartaire of twelve to now! I make ze signal wiz ze handkerchief as we agree. I ansaire to ze summons! Nevaire, nevaire has Leon gone back on his word!"

"I knew you'd be there," said the girl. "But the rest of it? It's finished, really?"

Leon's head went up and his eyes gleamed brightly. "It is accomplish! I am ze fortunate man since eleven o'clock!"

"Might I inquire," interrupted the frigid voice of Mr. Ethan Hulbert, "what this has to do with the

business in hand? I do not wish to intrude upon a friendly visit but I fail to see its bearing upon this meeting."

"Everything!" cried the girl. "I've just declared that the Barque Haven Arms goes to Stephen Quarrendar and not to Mary Smith of Denver, haven't I? And I have to prove it, don't I?"

"I should like you to do so."

"And so should I," said Quarrendar swiftly. Mary Jane Devens Smith might be an astonishingly versatile adversary but all she could do now would be to delay a final settlement of affairs for a few moments by opposing wild declarations to the verdict of Mr. Ethan Hulbert. It would be pronounced again once this diversion was over and that would be the end. The Barque Haven Arms was hers.

"Monsieur Quarrendaire!" The words were hurled at his employer by a French gentleman in whom dramatic fire was visibly mounting. "Nevaire, nevaire, as I have said before, have I seen such an employaire! Nevaire, nevaire has Leon been so happy as in ze kitchen zis summaire! Nevaire, nevaire in a proprietaire have I met wiz such courtesy and forgiveness for ze little mistakes zat occur. Nevaire, nevaire——"

"We might omit the bouquets, Leon." The tones of Stephen Quarrendar were threatening to become a shade curt. "Everybody knows we've worked well together. If you have any announcement to make let's have it as soon as possible."

"I have ze most important announcement to make!

Ze announcement of ze world-shaking magnificence! Ze announcement zat has changed my life forevaire! Monsieur Quarrendaire!" The waxed moustaches rose as Leon expanded his chest and flung both arms out in the gesture of one about to embrace the roomful. "I have ze pleashaire to announce zat I have contract an alliance ze most honorable wiz ze housekeepaire!"

"What's that?" burst from Quarrendar in amazement. "You say you've married the housekeeper?"

"Ze lady of ze New England familee! Her ancestaires zey pursue ze big fish—ze whales—for generations. Ze ancestaires of Leon zey are ze sailors too. For two years have I admire her—oh, so nobly—from ze distance. Zen come ze love songs—tendaire, not to be resisted by ze beating heart—from ze orchestraire in ze dining room. Luncheon and dinnaire zey sing to ze soul of Leon! Behold, ze grandest passion of all arrive! It is fanned to ze flame! I burn! I die! I make ze proposal ze most honorable for ze hand of ze widow, Mrs. Grimes, la belle housekeepaire. And zen, and zen ——"

Leon whirled about and flung his waving hand at Mary Jane Devens Smith.

"It is ze hat so chic from ze shop of Mademoiselle zat turn ze treeck. I present ze chapeau to ze lady and it melt her heart! She love Leon as he love her! Zis morning at eleven o'clock we are marry in ze little white church in ze village!"

Quarrendar held out his hand. "I congratulate you, Leon. That's quite a bit of news, isn't it?"

"It is ze no news at all! Not yet! Non! Non! Non! I tell ze beautiful Mademoiselle Smeeth of ze grand passion when I am buying ze chic hat. She has ze sympathetic eye. She too confide in me ze incredible tale. She inform Leon zat unless zere are three of ze love matches in ze hotel Monsieur Quarrendaire will go away and nevaire return—nevaire! He will lose ze magnificent establishment. Behold we plan, we plot togethaire!"

So Mary Jane Devens Smith had flung another romance into the struggle at the last moment. She was smiling now, a finger to the corner of her lips. Under the glove on that small hand there would be a thin gold band and probably a priceless solitaire. He didn't have to see them to know that they were there.

"It's good of you to tell me this, Leon. But one match—that is to say, yours—won't make a difference at this stage. I've lost the hotel, and I'm leaving it to-day for good but you needn't worry about that. Not that I don't appreciate your trying to help me."

"Nevaire, nevaire have I known such an employaire!"

"Yes—I know—very kind ——"

"Ze three affairs of love or Monsieur Quarrendaire —pouf!—he is depart! I work no more for him—my friend."

"Yes—oh, yes. But two more romances aren't here, Leon. We'll call it the will of fate."

"Ze will of fate! Bah! Zat for ze will of fate!" The short figure in the braided morning coat was be-

ginning to bound about. "Monsieur Quarrendaire! Nevaire shall you leave ze Barque Haven Arms! Two ozzaire couples zey get married also zis morning!"

"Two other couples!" Quarrendar shouted. "They did what?"

"All summaire has ze rascal Albert my assistant cast ze sheep's eyes at ze head chambermaid. Ze worthless Hyacinthe, ze bus boy, I catch him writing ze poetry to ze little waitress wiz ze red bow and ze small waist. Sacre milles des cordons bleus! I talk wiz Mademoiselle Smeeth! We plot, we plan! She give to Leon ze remarkable idea! I tell ze rascal Albert I ruin his life, I discharge him wizout ze reference if he do not marry ze chambermaid. I take ze worthless Hyacinthe by ze back of ze neck and I kick him into ze state of matrimony wiz ze petite. He is my nephew and I know what is good for him. Ze petite is ze niece of ze housekeepaire. Bon! Ze rascal Albert and ze worthless Hyacinthe zey are married wiz me an hour ago! It is ze ceremony of ze triple kind! Ze three romances are arrived! Leon has saved ze hotel for his employaire!"

"And you did this!" Wildly Quarrendar directed the words at Mary Jane Devens Smith, aloft on her upended trunk like a small queen.

"Yes, Stephen. All by myself just before I left the hotel. And I called up Leon on the telephone yesterday to make sure that the three of them were going to be married this morning."

A mirthful, delicious look came into her eyes.

"Now—now—now who wins, Stephen?"

"Ze Barque Haven Arms it belong to Monsieur Quarrendaire! Nevaire, nevaire have I seen such ——"

"No!" shouted Quarrendar. He found himself actually pounding with his fist on the table under the nose of a startled man of law. "No! No! No! Mr. Hulbert, these matches can't count! They are not those of guests in the hotel!"

"There was nothing said in your Great-uncle Quarrendar's will about restricting the required romances to the guests," declared Mr. Hulbert stiffly. "In no way can its clauses be construed as barring these matches. The staff which your great-uncle has maintained here for years all come from the best old New England native stock. I know the background of Leon, which includes his nephew."

"Ze fazzaire of ze rascal Albert own ze large factory," proclaimed Leon proudly. "Albert have ze bettaire sense."

"And I presume that Leon can produce the marriage certificates for us at any time."

"At zis moment!" The papers were slammed on the table, causing Mr. Hulbert to start slightly. "Zere is ze evidence!"

"Ah, yes. Complete and absolutely satisfactory." The lawyer's eyes travelled keenly over the three sheets.

Leon thrust them once more back into the breast pocket of the morning coat.

"And now I go—I go to ze happy bride! Monsieur Quarrendaire! Ze staff salute you! Nevaire, nevaire ——"

The last words of the gallant Leon drifted in from the corridor outside, a trifle muffled by distance. Mr. Ethan Hulbert stirred, tapped the table and made his pronouncement with the note of irrevocable authority.

" I now declare the Barque Haven Arms to be yours, Mr. Quarrendar. This is final. You have won it fairly and well. The title deeds will be placed in your hands immediately."

" I'll break the will! I'll sue to have it set aside! "

" Mr. Quarrendar! " Frosty indeed was the stare that Mr. Ethan Hulbert, attorney-at-law directed at him. " I happen to have drawn up this particular testament. No will that I have had a hand in has ever been broken."

It was doubtful if one ever had. A faint flash of hope had died as soon as it had arisen.

" For a legatee who has come into possession of an important property you appear to be taking your good fortune in a very peculiar manner. There is no doubt from what I have just learned from Mr. Arnold that it will be worth $500,000 not in five years but in two."

" I didn't want it for myself," muttered a haggard young man. " I wanted to give it to Mary Smith. She deserves it for the fight she put up and—and for other reasons."

"A lawyer is always prepared to come into contact with the oddities of human nature," remarked Mr. Ethan Hulbert, eyeing Quarrendar as though he were some totally new specimen. " But this is the strangest case of a legatee which I have encountered in some

time. You have been trying to lose the hotel yourself so that Miss Mary Smith might win it? To what end might I inquire?"

"I'm in love with her," fell from Quarrendar tiredly. Then he straightened in utter horror. He had never meant to say it aloud. He had betrayed himself utterly in the presence of her husband. Before witnesses he had declared himself the lover of another man's wife.

"I'm sorry," he said in a low voice. "You all heard me, of course. I didn't mean it to come out but somehow it did. You must think me an absolute rotter. I've made an awful mess of things here anyhow. So I'll go."

He held out his hand to Georgette and found her smiling mistily in sympathy. He held out his hand to young Mr. Peter Van Dyckman, feeling that its offer should be scornfully refused, and found it in a friendly clasp. He was going to be a sportsman to the end. He nodded to Mr. Hulbert and took a few weary steps that brought him up to Mary Jane Devens Smith on the top of her trunk.

"I've been the complete idiot, Jane. You've beaten me in the end as you were bound to. I'll take the Barque Haven Arms as a gift from you."

"With thanks, Stephen?"

"With thanks. Even if it doesn't mean anything to me now. You know how much I wanted you to have it. Well—that's over and done with. You're married. You're happy. That's what counts, after all. I won't see you ever again. Good-bye, Mary Jane Devens

Smith. Good-bye and congratulations, Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman, Junior."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed that youthful millionaire. "This is good!"

Quarrendar whirled on him, blazing. Laughed at, goaded, mocked in his torment—it was too much. But his clenched hands fell. This was her husband. She loved him.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the young man again.

Fiercely through a red haze Stephen Quarrendar glared at his tormentor. The red haze faded and black despair took its place. He took a slim gloved hand in his.

"Good-bye, Jane."

The violet eyes were soft and infinitely tender. He would always think of her as she was at this last moment.

"Good-bye, Stephen."

"There's nothing that can take away memories," he said very softly. "I'll always remember your eyes and your smile and your lips and the way you did your hair. We've been enemies all the time we've known each other but that couldn't be helped."

"No," she murmured. Her face was aglow.

"So—well—that's all. It's the end for me and the beginning for you. Good-bye, Jane. I'll never forget you."

"Good-bye, Stephen," she said for the second time.

He faced about abruptly as another burst of laughter came from Peter Van Dyckman. It was unendurable.

"I ought to apologize to you, I suppose," he shot out, "for speaking to your wife in private in your presence but I don't intend to. What I said was strictly between ourselves. But you needn't worry that I shall see her again in this world."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the scion of wealth. "Blessed if I don't tell him myself. Somebody has to. That's not my wife."

"What do you mean?"

"That's not Mary Smith."

Through a reeling haze Stephen Quarrendar glimpsed only one object that seemed substantial, the precise, calm countenance of Mr. Ethan Hulbert, pillar of the law.

"What did I hear?" he gasped at him. "What did this man just say?"

"He informed you, Mr. Quarrendar, that the young lady sitting on the trunk is not Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman, Jr. Also that she is not or ever has been Miss Mary Smith of Denver, Colorado. Both of his statements are correct."

"Then who—who—who is Mary Smith?"

"I am." The delightful Georgette spoke clearly. "I'm Mary Smith of Denver." She slipped her arm affectionately within that of young Mr. Van Dyckman. "But I've changed my name since Peter and I here were married yesterday."

"And who—who—who is ——"

The gayest, most thrilling voice he had ever heard or ever would hear answered that broken question.

"I'm Jane Devens. Just Jane Devens, Mary Smith's partner. She's Mary Anne Georgette Smith if you want all the information."

"I can vouch for the truth of Miss Devens' remarks." The incisive tones of Mr. Hulbert cut through the mad mental turmoil in which a young man felt himself struggling. "Miss Devens came to my office in New York last June only a few moments after you yourself, Mr. Quarrendar, had taken your leave. Miss Smith had had forwarded to her from Denver my notification regarding a mention of herself in the will of your Great-uncle Quarrendar and sent Miss Devens to me as her representative in order to be informed what it might be about."

"Georgette," murmured a delightful voice, "was sailing the next night for Paris. She had a million things to do that day."

"The following morning Miss Mary Smith appeared in person," went on Mr. Hulbert carefully. "Miss Devens had transmitted to her the nature of the bequest. Miss Mary Smith and myself had a brief talk. She declared that you had just invited her partner Miss Jane Devens to set up a shop in the Barque Haven Arms and inquired if there was any reason why Miss Devens should not act on her behalf as she saw fit during her stay. There was no reason why Miss Smith should not have an agent on the premises. The terms of the will did not forbid competition by the second legatee."

"I wanted a summer hotel then," said Georgette.

"Later"—she flashed a glance at Peter Van Dyckman—"I didn't."

"Miss Devens was allowed a free hand in all her actions. It is not my province to inquire into what she did or did not do at Barque Haven this summer for the protection of Miss Mary Smith's interests. Nothing illegal was contemplated and Mr. Quarrendar, of course, was not notified. It is not customary for a lawyer to betray the confidence of a client. Especially"—he made a brief nod towards Georgette—"such a charming one. Mr. Quarrendar appears to have mistaken Miss Jane Devens for Miss Mary Smith, and so do other persons in this hotel. I do not propose to go into the causes underlying that matter, which is extraneous. Is the situation clear to you now, Mr. Quarrendar?"

"Absolutely," he muttered. "It's as clear as—as—an old-fashioned Cape fog after a week of rain."

"In that case there is nothing further to be said." It was evident that the lawyer's ears had not caught Quarrendar's final observation. "The affair is concluded, satisfactorily I trust to all parties concerned. You will excuse me if I take my leave?"

Mr. Ethan Hulbert thrust his thin gold watch back into his pocket, picked up the last will and testament of Great-uncle Homer Quarrendar and proceeded sedately through the door. Already an eminent representative of the law had been kept from his luncheon for an appalling length of time.

"It's no place for us either," laughed Georgette.

"Come along, Peter. Something tells me the air will be blue with Stephen's words in about a minute. It was a low trick we played on you, wasn't it? But I never dreamed Jane could be such a horrifyingly wicked little person."

"She is," acknowledged Quarrendar grimly. "She ought to get a life sentence."

"We're rolling along the Cape for a bit," explained Peter Van Dyckman genially. "I wirelessed for the car and the chauffeur to meet us in Boston and Georgette and I are slipping down to the place of an uncle of mine that I've borrowed for the first week. We got out of our hotel in Boston one jump ahead of twenty reporters at seven o'clock this morning and picked Jane up at hers. Good idea, what? We'll push on to the tumbledown old family mansion at Newport afterwards and get to New York by easy stages." His tanned face was parted by a grin. "See you there soon, old man. You'll have to be one of our best visitors."

"You're—you're taking Jane along with you?"

"Heavens, no!" remarked the bride. "She stays here to stand her punishment."

"Devil!" Jane flung at her.

"Angel darling," said young Mrs. Peter Van Dyckman and kissed her. "Good-bye, people. See that she gets just what she deserves, Stephen."

"Georgette," called Jane, "you can put your rings back on now. I'm through acting."

They were alone. No words were spoken for a long time.

"Do I have to begin the argument, Stephen?" said an eloquent little voice presently. "You know I haven't any defense at all."

"Why did you come up here pretending you were Mary Smith?" he asked fiercely.

"You might have put Jane Devens, your rival's agent, out of the hotel. What did I know about you then? But you couldn't put out a girl you thought was Mary Smith, herself. It wouldn't be sporting."

"So you masqueraded under her name. You tried to get the hotel away from me for her."

"Until Georgette let me know she didn't want it any longer."

"And then you tried to give it to me."

"I succeeded, didn't I, Stephen?"

"While I was doing my best to pass it to you, believing that you were Mary Smith. You let me think you were engaged to Peter Van Dyckman."

"I couldn't very well tell you I wasn't Mary Smith until the game was over and the hotel was yours, could I? Besides you were the most conceited, egotistical, stubborn, absurd, reckless, crazy, impulsive, scatterbrained ——"

"That's quite enough. I'll do the talking."

—" jumper at conclusions I ever saw. You needed a lesson. You asked me up here yourself. I met Georgette at luncheon that day after seeing Mr. Hulbert and she told me if I had the chance to run up to the Barque Haven Arms and see what it and you were like. Peter came in just as we were finishing and

walked up to the shop with me. Then you appeared with your wild invitation and I couldn't resist."

The imp of mischief was dancing frankly now in her eyes. "I guess I'm made that way. Georgette and I talked it over that night and she went down to the lawyer's in the morning before she sailed. That cablegram you read meant that Peter had put over his engagement with Georgette and I heard from her the very next day telling me she was through with the hotel. Peter was following her abroad to make up her mind for her when he got through with his business in London and Berlin. Was it my fault you went jumping at some more conclusions and thought he meant me? Stephen, how did you hurt your arm?"

It was the first time that Miss Jane Devens had mentioned the member in the black silk sling.

"Never mind how I hurt it. Why did you keep up this Mary Smith Van Dyckman play-acting until Peter gave you away?"

"Because!"

"Because what?"

"Oh, just because. That's enough of a reason to satisfy anybody but a conceited, egotistical, stubborn ——"

From the flagging outside the windows of the sun parlor came a gleeful shout.

"Look who's here! If it isn't Steve and my old friend Mary Jane! I knew she'd be back!" Bill Weedon's bulky figure accompanied by the slim one of Etheldreda had materialized from nowhere. "It's all

rosy and bright, brother. Somebody's told the old lady I have a string of banks and real estate wrapped around my neck and I'm the fair-haired son-in-law from now on. Always knew she liked me. She's wild to come out to the Coast and see the new town I'm throwing up if I'll protect her from the buffaloes and the Indians. It's going to be named Etheldreda. You want a lot in it with my compliments? Just right for a cosy little cottage for two."

"Bill," said Quarrendar, "don't block the sunlight. You and Etheldreda go down and walk along the beach and don't frighten the gulls. This young lady and I are having a fight."

"Don't let her put anything over on you, old flivver. They'll try it every time. You bet your grandfather's wooden leg!"

The roaring died away. The reform of Bill Weedon, the pride of Walla Walla, it seemed, was not yet permanent.

"Aren't they dears?" murmured the girl. And then: "Stephen, I saw you go in the ditch with that car."

"Yes?"

"Then you stood up and waved at me."

"Well?"

"I heard what you called to me too just before you went over. So did the whole train."

"It didn't mean anything to you. We're still enemies."

"And I heard what you said right out in front of everybody here in this room not so long ago."

He did not answer. Time and again he had told this tantalizing, violet-eyed girl that he loved her and each time she had mocked at him and flaunted him. To her he was a summer's acquaintance against whom she had fought a long, hard struggle, first for her partner and then with no reason at all for him, emerging triumphant in the end. That was all he could ever be. He knew it now—hopelessly, inevitably. He shrugged his shoulders in utter fatigue and moved towards the door. It had been quite a wearing summer. Break it off short, would be best, and go.

"You've won, Jane. You've given me a hotel that's a gold-mine. I'm telling you that for the last time. I suppose I hate you now."

"Of course you do," she murmured. "That's all my fault too. I'm a fraud and a mischief-maker and not in the least the angel darling Georgette called me. I did do my best for you when I could. I'm a very, very modern girl, Stephen ——"

"You certainly are."

"But I don't intend to propose to any man unless I absolutely have to."

"Jane!"

There was no mistaking now the message in the violet eyes. Barque Haven had brought to him a glorious girl for all his days.

"Stephen, do be careful! You hurt that arm to tell me how much you loved me! Don't hurt it to prove it all over again!"

"It's the other one around you, Jane!" His voice

rang clear and triumphant. "The fight is finished! To the victors belong ——"

Soft lips met his and a blissful silence fell in the sunny, white-walled room. Somewhere close at hand hummed and sang the life of a great summer hotel but two young people had drifted away into a mystic realm of their own.

"Romance and adventure," he breathed. "Yes, Jane?"

"More than that, Stephen. Just peace. And it's come to stay."

THE END